

RETHINKING THE VERNACULAR IN CHINA

UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION AND THE
EVOLUTION OF RURAL ARCHITECTURE

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Abstract

The physical forms of vernacular architecture and spatial use reflect the social systems and ideologies of the rural environment. This thesis seeks to rethink the preservation of vernacular architecture by analyzing the physical manifestations of three eras and their respective architectural layers, characterized by social identities in the history of China. In this sense, this thesis does not take a necessarily follow past practices of studying vernacular architecture, which prioritize formal, structural, and material analyses. It instead recognizes a paradigmatic shift in heritage theory and policy that seeks to understand and valorize the relationships between populations and their environment.

From ancient China to the PRC (before 1949), rural society was based on the autonomous “village community.” Vernacular architecture styles gradually evolved after generations had inhabited the same territory. The physical forms interpret the social connections among individuals in the village community. From 1958 to 1978, the national government implemented policies of collectivism in the country. Land ownership was transformed from private to collective. The original “village community” became a part of a national institution – the “commune.” Communal life style and production have introduced new architectural and spatial typologies in the rural villages. From 1978 to the present, members of society have been individualized by the market. On the other hand, individuals still rely on the national government. Rural vernacular architecture has been transformed both autonomously by the local residents and systematically by top-down governmental control.

In many cases, the physical fabrics and social systems of the different time periods coexist in the village. The hybrid status of “village community,” “commune” and “individualization” evolves the notions of vernacular architecture and community, and challenges existing preservation approaches. The significance of transforming social constraints and the dialectics between modernization and tradition compel rethinking of the vernacular, and may suggest new methodologies for researching and preserving these communities and their architecture.

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01

Introduction

Historically, China has been a rural country, with land use being predominantly agricultural. From the 1950s, modernization has decreased both the arable land acreage and the rural population. In 1949, rural Chinese accounted for 89.4% of the total population. In 2011, the urban population was 51.3%, exceeding rural population for the first time.¹ The urban population is expected to reach 60% by 2020.² Rural society and the built environment have been greatly changed.

Over the last ten years, an average of 80 to 100 “natural” villages (自然村, *zirancun*)³ vanished every day.⁴ Faced with the loss of cultural identity and subsequent social problems, the national

¹ National Bureau of Statistics of China. 2017. “Total Population.” Accessed February 12, 2017. <http://data.stats.gov.cn/easyquery.htm?cn=C01>.

² Xinhua Net and the State Council of the People's Republic of China. 2016. “Li Keqiang: Chinese Urbanization Ratio Will Reach 60% by 2020.” Xinhua Net, March 5. Accessed February 12, 2017. http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016lh/2016-03/05/c_128775510.htm.

³ In China, “village” are divided as “natural village” and “administrative village.” Natural village refers to the village that is spontaneously and naturally exists, it is usually formed by one clan. The administrative village is a bureaucratic entity, which is brought up in *The Organic Law of Village Committees* in 1987. The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China. 2010. “The Organic Law of Village Committee” 中华人民共和国村民委员会组织法. Accessed February 25, 2017. http://www.gov.cn/flfg/2010-10/28/content_1732986.htm.

⁴ Feng Jicai, the vice chairman of the China Federation of Literature and Art and the State Council Counselor, suggested that the statistics show that there was 3.6 million natural village in China ten years ago, whereas only 2.7 million currently. Xinhua Net. January 2013. “A Calling for Preserving Traditional Village.” Accessed February 12, 2017. http://news.xinhuanet.com/local/2013-01/14/c_124229289.htm?prolongation=1.

government, scholars, and architects have started to reevaluate vernacular architecture in the countryside. Vernacular architecture in rural area is viewed as intact cultural heritage, since large swaths of urban heritage have been damaged by radical construction.⁵ In 2007, The annual Wuxi Forum on Chinese Cultural Heritage put forward the Wuxi Proposal to set up principles and guidelines to preserve vernacular architectural heritage. The Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development promulgated the Traditional Chinese Village Catalog in 2012, and 646 villages were inscribed on the initial list. There have been 4,157 villages in total included through 2016.⁶

“Vernacular building is the traditional and natural way by which communities house themselves. It is a continuing process including necessary changes and continuous adaptation as a response to social and environmental constraints.”⁷ This quote from the 1999 International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage illustrates the difference between vernacular architecture and other forms of architectural heritage, as there is generally less tolerance for change in the

⁵ Shan Jixiang. 2007. “Experts: Yangtze Delta Architecture at Risk.” Xinhua Net. Accessed March 31, 2017. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-04/12/content_5965687.htm.

⁶ The Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of the People’s Republic of China (MOHURD). 2016. “The List of Fourth Group of Villages Collected in the Traditional Chinese Village Catalog.” MOHURD. Accessed March 31, 2017. http://www.mohurd.gov.cn/wjfb/201612/t20161222_230060.html.

⁷ ICOMOS. Introduction to *The Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage*. Ratified by the ICOMOS 12th General Assembly. (1999), i.

latter. The preservation of vernacular architecture challenges the paradigms of preserving cultural heritage because its character and significance are rooted in its flexibility and adaptation to the changing environment, and in its interactions with local practices.

1.1 Research Questions

This thesis examines rural vernacular architecture and the tension between its changing social context and the call for preservation. In order to explore this overarching topic, the following specific questions are examined:

- *How was “vernacular architecture” first conceptualized in the context of Chinese rural villages?*
- *How has the concept of “vernacular architecture” changed as a result of social transformation?*
- *How the dynamic between “vernacular architecture” and its users influenced rural society over time?*
- *How might the preservation field effectively respond to these changing concepts and relationships?*

1.2 Methodology

This thesis does not take a necessarily follow past practices of studying vernacular architecture, which prioritize formal, structural, and material analyses. It instead recognizes a paradigmatic shift in heritage theory and policy that seeks to understand and valorize the relationships between populations and their environment. In this sense, this thesis uses tools that are increasingly applied to cultural landscapes, which forthrightly recognize the inextricable link between social and physical development.

This research is undertaken using a range of approaches, including a literature review, a chronological study on Chinese rural architectural transformations in the context of social, political and economic background research, and a case study of Longtan village (Wuchuan Gelao and Miao Autonomous County, Zunyi City, Guizhou Province) to further explore the thesis topic and research questions.

(1) Literature Review

The literature review includes the scholarly texts and policy reviews on the topics of Chinese vernacular architecture, Chinese rural society and villagers, and the preservation of architecture in

China. It is included separately in section 1.3.

(2) Chronological analysis of rural architectural transformations

The chronological analysis studies rural architecture as consequence of Chinese social, economic and political climates, from feudal China to the present. It is conducted through the literature review on Chinese history, social systems, social reforms, political ideologies, economic development, urban planning, architectural styles, and spatial characteristics of rural villages. The analysis helps to summarize the different logics and features of rural communities in different time periods. In this way, it seeks to hone in on the essence of traditional vernacular architecture, which is fundamentally what one hopes to preserve when radical modernization has been changing the fabric of rural.

This thesis examines three representative phases. Each of these symbolizes a different social system and its relevant architectural and spatial features.

The first phase is in ancient China, when each rural village in China was a small individual society. The social system during this time was the “village community.” The local residents were in the same clan and were territorially close. Different regions

have evolved their own unique vernacular architectural style.

The second phase is from 1958 to 1978. After the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, the central government has implemented a series of policies and social transformations to achieve economic and social development. The Great Leap Forward in 1958 transformed land ownership from private to collective. The rural living styles and built environment dramatically changed in this time of collectivization. The national institution of the "people's commune" replaced the traditional "village community."

The third phase is from 1978 to present day. In 1978, the household-responsibility system, which is a practice by which local residents are responsible for their own agricultural profits and losses, replaced the "people's commune." Even though the land ownership remains collective, the rural residents have the right to rent and occupy. At the same time, many of the social traditions of the first phase have been recovered. In the rural village, the power of the state overlaps with the village community. Rural residents have become more and more individualized, in order to pursue personal economic benefit. The state-driven market economy has brought a construction boom to rural areas. Given

the transformation of rural villages, the significance of preserving rural vernacular architecture has been raised in the last decade. Meanwhile, the preservation of the vernacular has led to the development of tourism in the countryside, which has consequently brought changes to the rural fabric.

(3) Case study: Longtan Village

This thesis uses Longtan village as a case study to further explore the research questions. The village is in Daping Town, Wuchuan Gelao and Miao Autonomous County, Zunyi City, Guizhou Province. Longtan is village of Gelao, which is a minority ethnic group living mainly in Guizhou Province. The cultural relics in Longtan are particularly rich. The traditional vernacular buildings with historical style and features are clustered and maintained in the traditional pattern. The village collectively reflects the ethnic features of Gelao buildings. Therefore, Longtan was recognized as a Famous Historical and Cultural Village in 2010, and is inscribed on the initial list of Traditional Chinese Village Catalog in 2012. Since then, the city and county government have been focusing on preservation and tourism development to reduce poverty. This is also regarded as a way of advancing the economic development in the larger geographical and administrative region.

Longtan village is representative case of vernacular architecture, building techniques, and the traditional customs of construction activities. Recent development has brought new infrastructure and tourism facilities, as well as changes to the surrounding spatial texture and building in the village.

Field research was conducted in summer 2016 and winter 2017. The data collection includes three parts: the qualitative and quantitative research on building and rural space, a community survey, and interviews with local construction companies. The study on spatial forms is approached through comparing the historic map before the tourism development in 2013, and drone imagery taken during field research in summer 2016. To study vernacular architecture and its modern adaptations, this research employs the methods of documentation and visual analysis on all the buildings in the village. Three prototypical buildings are measured for further analyzing the space and form: the traditional vernacular dwelling, a recent two-story dwelling, and the public space built by the construction company. Interviews and informal discourses were carried out to understand local residents' attitudes towards different kinds of construction in the village, the ideal life and living space, and the cost of different kinds of buildings.

1.3 Literature Review

This section provides a general literature review. The following chapters build on this review by drawing upon literature relative to the specific topics and analyses. The understanding of vernacular architecture in rural China and the architectural analyses of this thesis are served by the literature review of journal articles, academic literature, policy documents and regional annals. The review is organized in three parts: The research of vernacular architecture in China; the study of Chinese rural society; the study of preservation of vernacular architecture in China.

1.3.1 Vernacular Architecture in China

The scholarly studies on vernacular architecture can be divided chronologically into three areas: the early attention to vernacular architecture, cataloging and analysis through field survey and documentation, and modern adaptations.

(1) From the 1930s to 1960s:

The recognized significance of vernacular architecture

Long Feiliao published the first academic essay about vernacular architecture of caves in China in the Society for the Study of

Chinese Architecture⁸ in 1934. In the 1940s, Liu Dunzhen, a Chinese architectural historian who dedicated himself to the study of traditional Chinese architecture, raised the significance of vernacular architecture, and formally established the study of it in China. He conducted field research on traditional dwellings through building documentation and geospatial studies. His book *Zhongguo zhu zhai gai shuo* (《中国住宅概说》)⁹ published in 1957 is considered as the first book on Chinese traditional dwellings. It is noteworthy that in early academic research, from the 1940s to 1980s, the term “traditional dwelling” was used instead of vernacular architecture by scholars.

(2) From the 1960s to 2000s: Field survey and documentation

From the 1960s to the 1980s, academic research focused on documentary descriptions of the buildings, including layouts, structural system, and ornamentation. It employed field surveys and mapping. The scholarly research in this period provided basic knowledge of vernacular architecture for later scholars, who focused on the social, cultural, and environmental context that influenced the physical architectural forms. In 2004, Sun Dazhang published *The Research of Chinese vernacular*

⁸ Long, Feiliao 龙非了. “Xueju zakao” 穴居杂考 [A study of cave dwellings]. *Zhongguo ying-zao xueshe huikan* 中国营造学社汇刊 5.1(September 1934):55-76.

⁹ Liu, Dunzhen 刘敦桢. “Zhongguo zhuzhai gaisuho” 中国住宅概说 [A general introduction of Chinese dwellings]. *Tianjinshi: Baihua wenyi chubanshe* 天津市: 百花文艺出版社 2004.

Figure 1. Wang Shu designed a small open-air plaza in front of the ancestral hall for local residents in Wencun. *Source: Archdaily.*



dwelling, which was based on his early studies. It gives a comprehensive study of the evolution of vernacular architecture in general, vernacular architecture in different regions, overview of typical style, how the people construct and occupy the building, aesthetics value, traditional village and preservation issues.

(3) From the 2000s to the present:

Modern attempts by architects

Review of literature indicates an emerging interest among scholars and architects in the modernization of vernacular rural architecture. Wu Liangyong, who is considered the most influential architect and urban planner in China, proposed that vernacular architecture should fit within the needs of contemporary society.

Figure 2. "Sun Commune," a sty designed by architect Chen Haoru, who focuses on farming and community development. Source: [www. citiarc.org](http://www.citiarc.org).



Its future should not be a simple imitation of the past.¹⁰

There also has been a trend in architectural practice in the countryside. This part of the review is conveyed through the analysis of the architects' works. Many of the architects have noticed the importance of shaping a sense of community, and the advantage of indigenous building techniques and materials. For example, Amateur Architecture Studio (Wang Shu¹¹ and Lu Wenyu) explores the materiality in Wen village in Zhejiang Province to blend the modern intervention into the existing landscape

¹⁰ Wu, Liangyong 吴良镛. "Xiangtu jianzhu de xiandaihua, xiandai jianzhu de diqihua" 乡土建筑的现代化, 现代建筑的地区化 [The modernization of vernacular architecture and the regionalization of modern architecture]. *Huazhong jianzhu* 华中建筑 1(1998) page 6.

¹¹ Wang Shu (1963-), a Chinese architect. In 2012, he became the first Chinese to win the Pritzker Prize, the world's top prize in architecture. Robin Pogrebin. "For First Time, Architect in China Wins Field's Top Prize," New York Times, accessed May 1, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/28/arts/design/pritzker-prize-awarded-to-wang-shu-chinese-architect.html>.

naturally.¹² (*Figure 1*) Sun Commune, designed by Chen Haoru, a Chinese architect, is a livestock shed for the local residents. He invited the residents to construct the structure together to improve the identity of the community and to keep the building cost cheap.¹³ (*Figure 2*)

1.3.2 Rural Society in China

This literature review of rural society examines the thesis to understand the context of rural vernacular architecture, and how it changes in response to the transforming social background.

The monographs *Peasant Life in China* and *From the Soil, the Foundations of Chinese Society* of Fei Xiaotong, a pioneering Chinese sociologist and anthropologist, are considered as classics for scholars to understand traditional Chinese rural society. *Peasant Life in China* realizes the changes of a new social context and studies how the local residents react to the transformation. He evenly emphasized the significance of the traditional economy and the new forces intervening in villagers' everyday lives. *From the Soil, the Foundations of Chinese Society* is a theoretical

¹² "Conversation with Wang Shu: I'm Born an Architect," ArchDaily, accessed May 1, 2017, <http://www.archdaily.cn/cn/868043/wang-shu-fang-tan-wo-tian-sheng-jiu-gua-he-zuo-jian-zhu-shi>.

¹³ Amy Qin, "Architects See Potential in China's Countryside," New York Times, accessed May 1, 2017, <https://cn.nytimes.com/china/20160620/architects-see-potential-in-chinas-countryside/en-us/>.

publication depicting the rural social systems that determines villagers' interests, thoughts, and lives. The publication points out that the rural village is a "baseless society of acquaintance," where the morality, ethics, and social traditions regulate people's behavior.

Wu Xinye is a scholar whose research focuses on the levels of politics and public administration. His academic publication, *Political Space and Political Transition in Rural China: The Political Development of Rural China from 1992*¹⁴, has argued that the differences in the logic of political actors affect the process of political transformation, which forms different characteristics of the political space in different time periods. In the long history of social and political transformation in rural China, there have been two forms of social structure of the rural village: the "village community" and the "rural association." The "village community" is more autonomous, which is the structure of the traditional rural villages similar to the "baseless society of acquaintance" summarized by Fei Xiaotong. Whereas the "rural association" is an administrative concept. It refers to the village under governmental guidance or control. He argues that in contemporary China, the two structures coexist in rural villages, and the political

¹⁴ Xinye Wu 吴新叶, *Political Space and Political Transition in Rural China: the Political Development in Rural China from 1992* 转型农村的政治空间研究: 1992 年以来中国农村的政治发展. Zhongyang bianyi chubanshe 中央编译出版社, 2008.

development should both reflect the logic of political space in both the “village community” and “rural association.”

He Xuefeng’s publication *The Logic of Land Ownership: The Land System of Rural China*¹⁵ systematically provides the knowledge of the land ownership form ancient to contemporary China. The author argues that one must not discuss only the relationship between land rights, the villagers’ interests and the resource allocation efficiency. The field needs to go deep into the concrete context and situation of land system operation, and to explore the inner logic of land rights. The publication helps to examine how land ownership has changed and may affect the transitions of the built environment in different time periods.

1.3.3 Preservation of Vernacular Architecture in China

The following relative terms should be distinguished in the context of preservation in China, and preservation of vernacular architecture in particular.

(1) Heritage site or site

(文物 , *Wenwu*, previously used cultural relic)

¹⁵ Xuefeng He 贺雪峰, *Diqun de luoji: Zhongguo tudi zhidu hequ hecong* 地权的逻辑: 中国土地制度向何处去 [The logic of land ownership: where should the land system of China go]. Zhongguo zhengfa daxue chubanshe 中国政法大学出版社, 2010.

“Heritage site” or “site” includes movable and immovable heritage. According to Cultural Relics Protection Law of the People’s Republic of China, cultural relics consist of:

- (a) sites of ancient culture, ancient tombs, ancient architectural structures, cave temples, stone carvings, and mural paintings that are of historical, artistic, or scientific value;
- (b) Important historical sites, material objects and typical buildings of modern and contemporary times related to major historical events, revolutionary movements or famous people that are highly memorable or are of great significance for education or for the preservation of historical data;
- (c) Valuable works of art and handicraft articles dating from various historical periods; Important documents as well as manuscripts, books and materials, etc., that are of historical, artistic or scientific value dating from various historical periods;
- (d) Typical material objects reflecting the social system, social production or the life of various nationalities in different historical periods.¹⁶

¹⁶ “Cultural Relics Protection Law of the People’s Republic of China, 2002 Revision.” Accessed April 5, 2017. <http://www.lawinfochina.com/Display.aspx?lib=law&Cgid=42878>.

(2) Famous Historical and Cultural Village

(历史文化名村 , *Li shi wen hua ming cun*)

In 2003, the State Council and the State Administration of Cultural Heritage initiated the concept and the criteria of a “famous historical and cultural village”: a village with an unusual wealth of cultural relics of high historical value and major revolutionary significance may be a street or village of historical and cultural value, which shall be subject to the approval and announcement of the people’s governments of provinces, autonomous regions, or municipalities directly under the Central Government, and shall be reported to the State Council for record.¹⁷ The national preservation framework for the famous historical and cultural villages includes responsibilities at varying levels of government. Policies at the county (lowest) level of administration and all those higher are required to work within this framework.

(3) Traditional Dwelling

(传统民居 , *Chuan tong min ju*)

Sun Dazhang has given the definition of the traditional dwelling in his academic publication *The Research on Chinese Traditional Dwelling* as: “the physical entity of people’s everyday life. It provides shelter to prevent coldness and torridity, wind and rains. It

¹⁷ “Cultural Relics Protection Law of the People’s Republic of China, 2002 Revision,” Chapter 1, Article 14. Accessed April 5, 2017. <http://www.lawinfochina.com/Display.aspx?lib=law&Cgid=42878>.

functions of living, dining, reading, hosting guests and friends, and sometimes production. It is the private space of a household." This is very close to the definition of "vernacular architecture" in Oxford English Dictionary: "architecture concerned with ordinary domestic and functional buildings rather than the essentially monumental."¹⁸ However, the traditional dwelling only refers to the typology of residential architecture, whereas, the vernacular also comprises other architectural typologies, such as temple and ancestral hall, that share indigenous features. "Traditional dwelling" was the term used by academic research from the 1940s to the 1980s, instead of vernacular architecture.

(4) Vernacular Architecture (乡土建筑 , *Xiang tu jian zhu*)

From the 1980s, Chen Zhihua, a Chinese scholar expert in historic preservation and vernacular architecture, recommended replacing the term "traditional dwellings" with "vernacular architecture" in academia. Vernacular architecture does not only refer to certain architectural forms, but also the cultural and natural environment as a whole.

The early preservation work on vernacular architecture in China was basically research and documentation of traditional dwell-

¹⁸ "Vernacular architecture," *OED Online*. February 2017. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/222608?redirectedFrom=vernacular+architecture#eid15754864>.

ings. The types of vernacular architecture which are recognized as cultural relics are often in low regulation and protection levels, and less attention is paid to these buildings. So far, there have been four ways of preservation.

(5) In Situ (就地保护, *Jiu di bao hu*)

In situ preservation is applied to preserving buildings that are inscribed as heritage within a village or building group. The heritage may easily lose its original context and become isolated when surrounding vernacular buildings are not protected and are replaced by new forms.

(6) Relocation (迁移保护／异地保护, *Qian yi bao hu/yi di bao hu*)

Some of the cultural relics are dismantled and moved from their original sites for environmental changes or exhibition. A famous example is *Yinyutang* (荫余堂, *yin yu tang*), a traditional Anhui style residence that was relocated to the Peabody Essex Museum in Boston.¹⁹ (Figure 3) This method is largely criticized by Chinese scholars, who insist landscape is significant to preservation of the traditional dwellings.²⁰

¹⁹ Peabody Essex Museum. "Yinyutang, A Chinese Home." Accessed April 5, 2017. <http://www.pem.org/sites/yinyutang/>.

²⁰ Li, Liang. Ifeng History. September 2013. "Historic Preservation Expert Ruan Yisan: Relocating the Heritage with Caution." Accessed April 5, 2017. http://news.ifeng.com/history/shixueyuan/detail_2013_09/16/29659200_0.shtml.

Figure 3. Yinyutang relocated in Peabody Essex Museum, Boston.
Source: jgwaarchitects



(7) Preserving historic condition (原状保护 , *Yuan Zhuang bao hu*)

This manner of preservation is meant to ensure the authenticity and integrity of vernacular architecture, its built environment, and the living style and culture of the local residents. Emphasis is placed on maintaining the traditional living style and culture of the local residents. Though this method is often used to attract tourists, it is rarely supported by the local community because the requirements of modern life cannot be met.

(8) Overall Protection (整体保护 , *Zheng ti bao hu*)

This style of preservation is different from the previous method in that vernacular architecture could be adapted to meet mod-

ern living conditions. In the 1970s, Wu Liangyong proposed the theory of “urban organic renewal.” It is to renew physical, cultural and social environments that have no longer adapted to the current urbanistic lifestyles.²¹ This method has also been recommended for the renewal of historical and cultural villages. The condition of integrity within the vernacular building group should be ensured. The renewal should comply with the inner order on which the settlement has developed.²²

There exists a dynamic between localized approaches and globalized approaches, which has some common ground. In the mid-1990s, Chen Zhihua, an expert in preserving the vernacular in China, and Bernard Feilden, a British conservation architect who was the director of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) at the time, advocated to preserve vernacular architecture. As the result, the ICOMOS 12th General Assembly in 1999 ratified the Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage. They raised the point that vernacular architecture should be protected by the village as a whole.²³

²¹ Ke Fang 方可. *Contemporary Beijing Urban Renewal* 当代北京旧城更新. [Zhongguo jian-zhu gongye chubanshe 中国建筑工业出版社, 2000], 197-198.

²² Jixiang Shan 单霁翔, “Wu Liangyong’s Academic Contribution to Cultural Heritage 吴良镛学术思想对文物事业的贡献,” *China Cultural Heritage* 02(2012): 10.

²³ Qing Gu. Urbanization Net. 2012. Chen Zhihua: China Should Fight for the Preservation of vernacular architecture. Accessed April 2, 2017. http://www.ciudsrc.com/new_zazhi/fengmian/2012diyierqihakan/2012-02-23/25857.html.

The Charter and the global discourse has greatly influenced the field of preservation in China. According to the principles of conservation in the Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage, the vernacular includes the traditions and the intangible associations that are tied to physical forms.²⁴ This principle especially applies to most of vernacular architecture in China, which consists in timber or earthen construction. The materiality is different from stone and brick in that it is generally less durable. Hence, the object of preservation is dissimilar. For example, *restoration through complete disassembly* (全部解体修复／落架大修, *Quan Ti Jie Ti Xiu Fu/Luo Jia Da Xiu*) has been a major treatment of wood buildings in China. The original wood structure is dismantled, then the deteriorated components are replaced by new ones, and finally the new components are reassembled. The construction techniques and materials are significant in this case.

The Charter additionally characterized the flexibility in adapting to the changing environment, declaring, “it is a continuing process including necessary changes and continuous adaptation as a response to social and environmental constraints.” This is consistent with the recent concern among Chinese scholars that vernacular architecture should fit the needs of contemporary

²⁴ ICOMOS, 1999 Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage.

society, instead of freezing it in a historic moment.²⁵

1.3.4 Overall Literature Review Findings

The literature review provides background knowledge of traditional Chinese vernacular architecture, the context of rural society and the preservation of vernacular architecture. Though, the review identifies two gaps in the existing research.

The first one is the lack of study as to whether and how vernacular architecture forms have been transformed by the local residents themselves, when confronting with the impacts of modernization and urbanization. The previous research has mostly focused on the well-documented description of traditional architectural form and the historic environment. It is studied as an unchangeable cultural heritage. Scholarly resources are extremely limited from the 1950s to now. Little attention has been paid to how modern rural villagers interpret their vernacular buildings, and how this differentiated from past relationships of people to their environments. In addition, changes in spatial form and the village community have not been studied.

²⁵ "What a world to give to the next generation: Wu Liangyong and Preservation of Historic Towns." Xinhua Net. Accessed May 1, 2017. http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2004-03/22/content_1378378.htm.

The second gap in the existing literature is that architectural or spatial changes have not been studied in relation to the social structure of the village society and the factors driving social transitions. For example, land ownership issues are key to understanding rural dynamics. It is relevant to the private and public properties of rural residents, such as dwellings and temples. However, it has not been spotlighted in the studies of vernacular architecture or modern preservation issues. Another example is that even though vernacular architecture and local community have been considered as unitary, the idea of “community” in the vernacular environment has not been sufficiently defined. With the radical transformation of Chinese society, the community in the rural environment has experienced major change. This raises important, yet unanswered questions, about what aspects of “community” are to be protected in the context of vernacular architecture preservation.

The above two gaps could be summarized as a lack of research regarding vernacular architecture since the 1950s, and the dynamics between vernacular architecture and changing social systems. This thesis aims to fill the two gaps that have been observed throughout the literature review, and to answer the research questions stated above.

"Village Community": From Ancient China to 1949

This chapter investigates traditional vernacular architecture in feudal society, and examines the social systems tied to the rural village of the time. It aims to explore the research questions of how was “vernacular architecture” first conceptualized in the context of Chinese rural villages, and how “vernacular architecture” interacted with village societies in ancient China.

2.1 An Introduction of “Village Community”

There were two kinds of settlements in ancient China: the village and the city.²⁶ The word village in Chinese is *nongcun* or *xiangcun*. *Nong* means agriculture and *Cun* means village. *Xiangcun* almost has the same meaning with *nongcun*, though it is often used to describe a sense of nostalgia. City in Chinese is *chengshi*. *Cheng* means a walled place, and *Shi* means market. (Figure 4) The cities were built on purpose by the government, whereas, the villages were collections of dwellings built by the residents

²⁶ Sun, Dazhang, *Zhongguo Min Ju Yan Jiu* 中国民居研究, Beijing: China Architecture & Building Press, 2004.

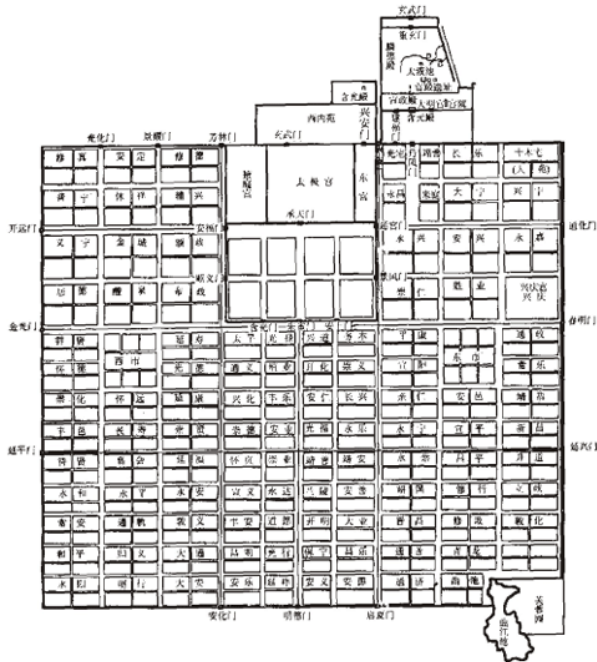


Figure 4. Plan of Chang'an, capital city of Tang Dynasty (618-907). The city was enclosed with city walls, and the markets were on the south. Source: Pan, Guxi. *A History of Chinese Architecture*.

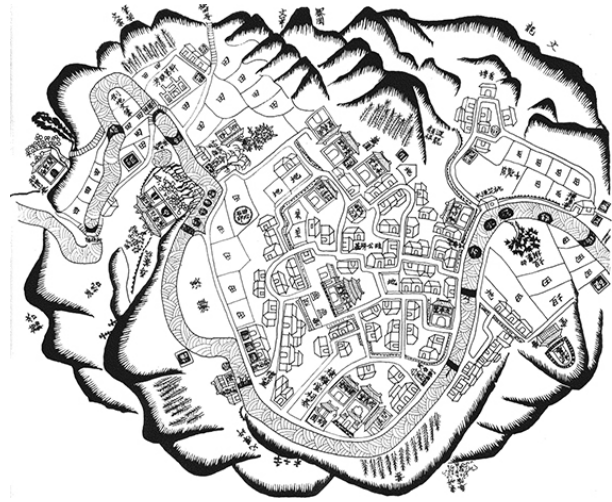


Figure 5. Zhi Feng Quan Tu, c. 1904. The drawing showed the pattern of a village settled in the mountains and along a river. It was different from a layout of a city in ancient China. Source: Jin Qiuye, "Wang Shu de zaozifa."

without planning. The site chosen for the village was based on the topography, climate, water resources, and other environmental factors to ensure a space suitable for living and farming. Traditional vernacular architecture in different regions gradually evolved to its unique style over many generations. (Figure 5)

Rural China was long based on the peasant economy. A village was agriculturally self-sufficient, without reliance on the of

commodities. From the perspective of agricultural production, it was similar to what Marx summarized as the French village, “The allotment farmers are an immense mass, whose individual members live in identical conditions, without, however, entering into manifold relations with one another. Their method of production isolates them from one another, instead of drawing them into mutual intercourse. ... Every single farmer family is almost self-sufficient, itself produces directly the greater part of what it consumes; and it earns its livelihood more by means of an interchange with nature than by intercourse with society.”²⁷ There was no need for different families to live closely to each other in a French village. In China, even though each household had private land and a private house, as Fei Xiaotong²⁸ wrote, villagers gathered and inhabited within a region close to each other for other reasons:

- (1) The piece of land that each family cultivated was invariably small. This was an agricultural economy; people lived together in the same place so that they could be close to their fields.

²⁷ Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, (Chicago, Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1907), 71.

²⁸ Fei Xiaotong or Fei Hsia-Tung (November 2, 1910 – April 24, 2005) was the pioneer of China's sociologists and anthropologists. His research and works including Chinese ethnic groups and rural issues laid a solid foundation for the development of sociological and anthropological studies in China. His studies also introduced the Chinese social and cultural phenomena to the western world.

- (2) Where irrigation was required, people had to work together as a group, therefore, living together was quite convenient.
- (3) Living together as a group also greatly contributed to everyone's security.
- (4) They practiced partible inheritance of land, which gave an equal share of an estate to all male heirs. The practice of dividing land among brothers, and then attaching each of them to the same soil, meant that over a period of several generations small communities grew into large villages.²⁹

A village, therefore, was usually based on territory and kinship. It was relatively isolated from other villages. "Territorial bonds" and "kinship bonds" in a village formed the "baseless society of acquaintance" (熟人社会, *shu ren she hui*) .³⁰ Morality, ethics and social traditions, and their interactions with each other and the environment regulated the people, rather than institutionalized laws. Society was largely based on the relationship between people, meaning kinship, friendship, and mutual assistance. This social order was different from the one of the cities, where in an increasingly large and complicated social space, people became strangers and relied on laws to organize society.

²⁹ Xiaotong Fei, *From the soil, the foundations of Chinese society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, c1992), 41.

³⁰ Fei, *From the soil, the foundations of Chinese society*, 41.

Hence, a traditional village, based on “baseless society of acquaintance,” has been esteemed as “community” (社群, *she qun*), which is formed according to the intimacy of a long-term communal life.³¹ Whereas the social order in the city is the idea of “association,” where citizens are working together for a common purpose but for their own benefit, and are governed by the nation. These two paradigms are similar to what David Miller, the British political theorist, described as “solidaristic communities” and “instrumental associations.”³² (共同体, *gong tong ti*) As stated by Miller, another difference is that in a community, people share certain identity, which is not required in an association.

The subject of the rural community could be categorized in three levels: the rural residents, the households, the village community. The residents of a family formed a household, and the households of the same clan and region formed the village community. Therefore, the rural residents were the basic units of the village community.

³¹ Xinye Wu 吴新叶, *Political Space and Political Transition in Rural China: the Political Development in Rural China from 1992* 转型农村的政治空间研究: 1992 年以来中国农村的政治发展 (Zhongyang bianyi chubanshe 中央编译出版社, 2008), 54.

³² David Miller, *Principles of Social Justice* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999), 27-31.

2.2 Vernacular Architecture and Space in Village Community

Recognition of vernacular architecture has grown worldwide over the last half century. Paul Oliver, the British architectural historian who studied the significance of vernacular architecture, described the overall “vernacular architecture” as the shelters that are “still built by their owners, by communities that pool resources, or by local specialized builders and craftsmen.”³³

The definition of vernacular architecture also identifies the social structure of the village community. It suggests the roles of local residents as well as the relationships between them. By acknowledging the roles of owners, the communities and the local experts, it highlights the subjective roles of local residents in constructing vernacular architecture. It also suggests that community members build vernacular architecture collaboratively.

The spatial typologies of Chinese rural villages in this time period included living space, public space, and production space. In traditional village communities, the households owned private land. They built their residences and cultivated the farmland. They also held collective properties, which were usually religious or ancestral temples,³⁴ though public activities did not happen

³³ Paul Oliver, *Introduction to Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World* (Cambridge, England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), xxi.

³⁴ Eduard B. Vermeer, Frank N. Pieke, and Woei Lien Chong, *Cooperative and Collective in*

only in the collective properties. They often took place in private properties, and during everyday life and work.

This section studies these three spatial categories in the village community: the residence; the public space; and the farmland, by analyzing their physical features and how they were formed by social structure.

2.2.1 Living Space – Residence

Rural villages were collections of dwellings in ancient China. The residences contained the everyday life of the villagers. This section focuses on the major features of vernacular residences, their spatial arrangement, and the social meaning of their physical architecture.

(1) Features

A primary feature of vernacular architecture is that the local residents built in response to the environment. For example, people in southeastern China used wood from nearby forests to build stilted buildings, in order to make the living space warm in winter and cool in summer, and to reduce the impact of

China's Rural Development: Between State and Private Interests (Armonk, New York and London England: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), 50.



Figure 6. Yaodong. Source: www.hschinese.com

humidity during the rainy season.³⁵ Whereas, people in the Loess Plateau in north China traditionally lived in the *yaodong* (窑洞, cave dwelling). The local residents excavated caves that were connected to each other within the hillside. The material and structure kept the interior warm in the cold season without heating, and extremely cool in the summer.³⁶ (Figure 6) Even though in certain regions the communities adopted earthen architecture to live in, the majority used wood structure for residences.³⁷ In response to a fairly predictable natural environment, once vernacular architecture had formed a mature style, it remained unchanged for a long time without significant social reform.

³⁵ Sun, *Zhongguo minju yanjiu*, xx.

³⁶ Sun, *Zhongguo minju yanjiu*, xx.

³⁷ Sun, *Zhongguo minju yanjiu*, 210.

Another feature of vernacular architecture, especially the residential typology, is that the building is not considered everlasting. The Chinese people regard their dwelling as they do clothing. Therefore, it is hard to find a traditional dwelling aged three or four hundred years.³⁸ One reason is that the materiality of wood or earth is hard to maintain. Another is because the continuity of a clan had the most significance in village society.³⁹ It would be meaningless if the family did not survive but their building still endured. It was acceptable to evolve both the architectural style and construction technology to better adapt the needs of people. Therefore, there was not a conception of preservation, as interpreted today, in ancient China.

(2) Spatial arrangement

Even though the forms of vernacular architecture varied in different regions and cultures, in general, traditional Chinese architecture followed the modular system (模数制) or framework system, which used frames (间架, *jianjia*) connected by beams. Two frames formed one *jian* (间). Per the legal codes of feudal dynasties, the residence for common people (庶民) should not exceed three *jiangs* in width and five *jiangs* in depth.⁴⁰

³⁸ Sicheng Liang 梁思成, *Zhongguo jianzhu shi* 中国建筑史 [Chinese architectural history] (Mingwen shuju 明文书局, 1981), 249.

³⁹ Yutang Lin 林语堂, *My Country and My People* 中国人 (Xuelin chubanshe, 1994), 48.

⁴⁰ Collected Statutes of the Ming Dynasty (《大明会典》), the administrative regulations and delegated legislation of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), clarified the regulations on the classi-

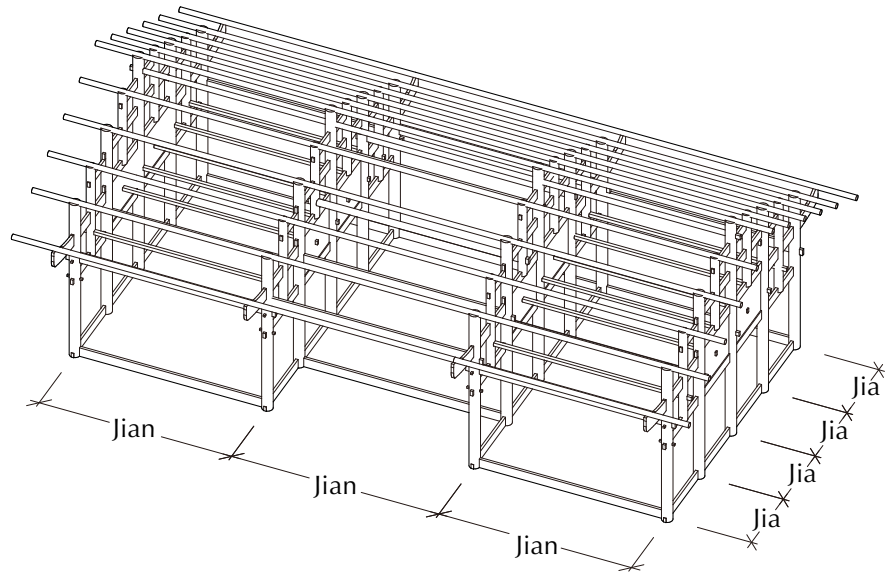


Figure 7. The modular system that used *Jian* and *Jia* as units in a traditional Chinese dwelling.

(Figure 7) If the household needed more living space, it was common to build additions attached to the two sides of the original residence.⁴¹ Functionally, rural vernacular dwellings were efficient in managing space. The central *jian* was usually used for ancestor worship, hosting guests, holiday celebration, meals, household part time business, and sometimes storage. The two *jians* on the sides are *cijians* (次间), which were used for bedrooms. In many wood frame buildings, the upper floors were used as storage rooms. Kitchens, bathrooms, and livestock sheds were separated from the main houses.⁴² (Figure 8)

fication of architecture. Shumin (the people, or the commoners) must build their houses no more than three *jians* and five *jias*, and must use *dougong* (a unique structural element of interlocking wooden brackets that is only used for imperial buildings) or *cai hui* (color painting on buildings) in their houses. “庶民房舍不得超过三间五架。” Da Ming hui dian 大明会典 [Collected statutes of the Ming Dynasty](Yangzhou Shi: Guang ling shu she, 2007).

⁴¹ Sun, *Zhongguo minju yanjiu*, 210.

⁴² Sun, *Zhongguo minju yanjiu*, 210.

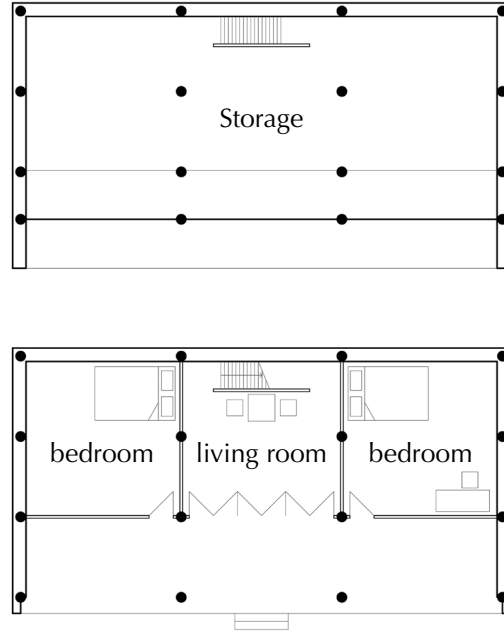


Figure 8. Spatial Layout of a traditional dwelling in Yunnan Province.

(3) Social Tradition

When the son of a family got married, he would separate from his parents and live apart. Daughters did not have the right to participate in the division of properties, because of the “son preference” (重男轻女) in Chinese tradition. The first way to separate the house was that the son and parents used different areas in the original dwelling: parents lived in the left *cijian* and son lived in the right one. Though the parents and son still shared *zhongtang* (中堂, the *jian* in the middle) during festivals and ceremonies. *Fenhuo* (分伙), which meant using different kitchens, is the symbol of the separation. The families also rearranged the toilets, bedrooms, and storage. In addition, marriage meant

an expansion in family members, which led to a shortage of living space. When parents passed away, the property was to be divided by the sons in the family. The second way was for parents to bestow a part of their land to the son for him to build his own house. The construction of new houses required the assistance and participation of other residents in the village. The significance of this process enhanced the sense of village community.

“The human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.”⁴³

Marx’s quote could adequately explain the rural community. In a settled agricultural society like the Chinese rural village, people were self-sufficient with agricultural production, so connections with other people were only under specific circumstances.⁴⁴

These circumstances included ritual ceremonies and individual family affairs, such as weddings, new births, and funerals. Moreover, construction activities had a dominant role in social life.

(Figure 9)

As mentioned above, the rural village is a collection of dwellings. Residences are the major typology in the village. Each private

⁴³ Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach, Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, Appendix (London: Electric Book Co., c2001), accessed February 12, 2017, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/columbia/detail.action?docID=3008508>.

⁴⁴ Fei, *From the soil, the foundations of Chinese society*, 18.

Figure 9. A wedding taking place in a household in Shangping village in Guizhou Province. *Source: ihuawen.com.*



residence requires the mutual aid of the traditional village community. Most of the buildings were wooden structures that could not be finished individually by the owner, meaning that building construction required the collaborative effort of other residents in the village. Second, family affairs gave rise to the construction activities, because weddings and funerals often suggested new houses or additions. This section focuses on how the local residents actively created and transformed the surrounding physical world in a collaborative way, and which in return, reinforced the social structures of the community.

The construction activities this thesis refers to are new constructions and reconstructions that relied on the collective work

Figure 10. Construction ceremony - Shang Liang yi shi, in Shangpingcun, Fujian Province. Photo: Zhao Zhuoran, 2016.



and the sharing of knowledge among the local residents in the village. The building technique, working organization, and social customs in the construction process all define the idea of “village community.” (Figure 10)

This thesis takes the construction process of *chuandou* wooden framework structure as an example. *Chuandou* is prevalent in southern China. (Figure 11) One reason for this thesis’ focus on this system is that *chuandou* is considered in the academic field as the “archetype” (original type) of structural system.⁴⁵ Another

⁴⁵ Chuandou and Tailiang are known as the two main wooden structural system unique in China. Though Chuandou is esteemed as the essence of Chinese wooden structure. It’s construction logic is “woven,” which is evolved from Chaoju (巢居, nest dwelling). Tailiang, also known as the northern or guanshi (官式, formal) architectural system, evolved from chuandou. Though the logic is similar to layering stone or brick, but not presenting the feature of wood structure. Xiao Hao 肖旻, “*Evolutionary of the Types of Ancient Chinese Wooden Framework and Their Relationship*” 试论古建筑木构架类型在历史演进中的关系, Huanan Technology University, 2009.



Figure 11. *Chuandou* in a vernacular dwelling in Tian village, Guizhou Province.

reason is that *chuandou* is still easy to find nowadays in southern Chinese villages. Even though the procedures could have subtle changes in different villages or regions, in general they share similarities. The thesis uses the case in Longtan village to specifically analyze this phenomenon. The construction process includes six steps in general:

(a) Zeji (择基, site choosing)

The site is chosen by the household owner based on his own

economic capability and the scale of the house. The area usually should be suitable for construction and wide enough for the building. The site should be within or on the outskirts of the village.

(b) *Beiliao* (备料, material preparation)

After the site is chosen and the scale is decided, the owner invites a *dashifu* (大师傅, carpenter) in the village, who has knowledge of structure, calculating measures of the components, and the details of joints. *Dashifu* is also called *Moshi* (墨师, the person who is in charge of ink marking) in the regions where wooden houses are built, because he is the only carpenter who has the right to make lines on the logs. Then the *dashifu* determines which materials are required and draws up an inventory for the house owner to get the materials ready. The owner generally prepares the materials during slack season in the summer. The selection of the central pillar is the most significant, for it symbolizes good fortune. The owner has to offer sacrifices to the chosen tree. Only after the ceremony, can he and the assistants obtain the lumber.

(c) *Famo*

(发墨, making ink lines on the wooden columns and beams)

After the wood is dry and polished, dashifu starts to draw ink lines. The lines have to be straight and even, which indicates the safety and success of the whole procedure. This step is the opening ceremony of the construction.

(d) *Zaoyan* (凿眼 , chiseling)

Zaoyan is the structural carpentry work. *Dashifu* is in charge of ink marking and assigning work to his assistants. Based on the ink lines, the assistants use saws, chisels, and axes to make *mao* (卯) and *sun* (榫) , which are the basic components of the wooden joints. The assistants then assemble the components into a *chuandoujia* (穿斗架 , truss) . The owner is responsible for providing meals, water, and snacks for the all the craftsmen during the workday. Once off duty, the employment relationship is immediately turned into a neighborhood relationship. The owner often invites the craftsmen for dinner and drinks.

(e) *Chou Fangzi* (抽房子 , assembly *chuandoujia* or truss)

It is to elevate the *jianjias* and connect them with the beams. This step must be finished in one day in the Gelao ethnic tradition. Similar to most construction of Chinese vernacular architecture, it is the most significant process of all. *Dashifu* and his assistants, house owner, village leader, and almost all the other local

residents are involved. The house owner invites the neighbors in the village for help. Instead of offering money as reward, the owner only provides meals. *Dashifu* is the chief commander. The assistants help to move the components onto the foundation and repair certain components before elevating. The house owner is responsible for hosting guests. The male neighbors work under the direction of *Dashifu*, while the female neighbors help the housewife to prepare a feast. The village head or clan elder with high prestige shouts slogans when people start to erect the trusses. The next day is the *shangliang yishi* (上梁仪式, beam raising ceremony). On this day, all the local residents are invited for a formal feast, which is as solemn as a wedding or funeral. The feast has been prepared by the hostess and her female relatives in the village several days earlier. As per convention, the guests give red paper containing money as a gift to the host.

(f) *Ruanzhuang* (软装, building envelopes and decorations)

Dashifu finishes his work once the major wooden structure is done. The carpenters with professional skills in wooden envelopes and decorations are responsible for this step. The host chooses an auspicious day after all the walls, doors, windows and decorations, are finished. Then the household sacrifices a rooster as a ceremony, which symbolizes the completion of the

new housing construction.

The process has strong ritual components and social roles. The household owner, dashifu, assistants, carpenters, clan elder and other residents involved in this process each perform a different role in the activities.

The economic exchange takes place within the context of “community” and comprises a web of interpersonal relationships. The social order in the rural village is reflected and consolidated by these construction activities.

2.2.2 Public Space

Rural public space was equally important to vernacular architecture. It not only created the place for social activities, but also reinforced the social orders in the village communities. Scholars have considered the public space as the essential reason for forming the basic village pattern. The public space was the center of the village in two aspects: public events and spiritual beliefs. The residences were built and expanded surrounding these centers.⁴⁶ The space for public events was usually a small open

⁴⁶ Sun, *Zhongguo minju yanjiu*, 510.

space or plaza enclosed by a number of vernacular dwellings. (Figure 12) The spiritual center referred to the ancestral temples and halls. (Figure 13)

Another kind of public space was for daily conversations and exchanging information. The places were chosen by local residents based on their custom and their familiarity with the place. For example, the residents washed clothes by the river, hence, the river bank became public space for communication.⁴⁷

There were also other forms of public activities that did not occur in a single fixed place. They were the social traditions that required the participation or mutual aid of local residents, which played important roles in enhancing the community relationship. This kind of activity mainly consisted in weddings, funerals and construction activities.

2.2.3 Production Space – Farmland

The buildings and public space were the carriers of everyday life. The land supported agricultural production, which was the dominant means of production in historical rural society. As Fei

⁴⁷ Dong Wang, Yong Wang, and Guangbin Li, "The Research of the Rural Public Space Evolution and Characteristics Under the Function and Form Perspectives" 功能与形式视角下的乡村公共空间演变及其特征研究. *International Urban Planning* 国际城市规划 (2013) vol.28 No.2.

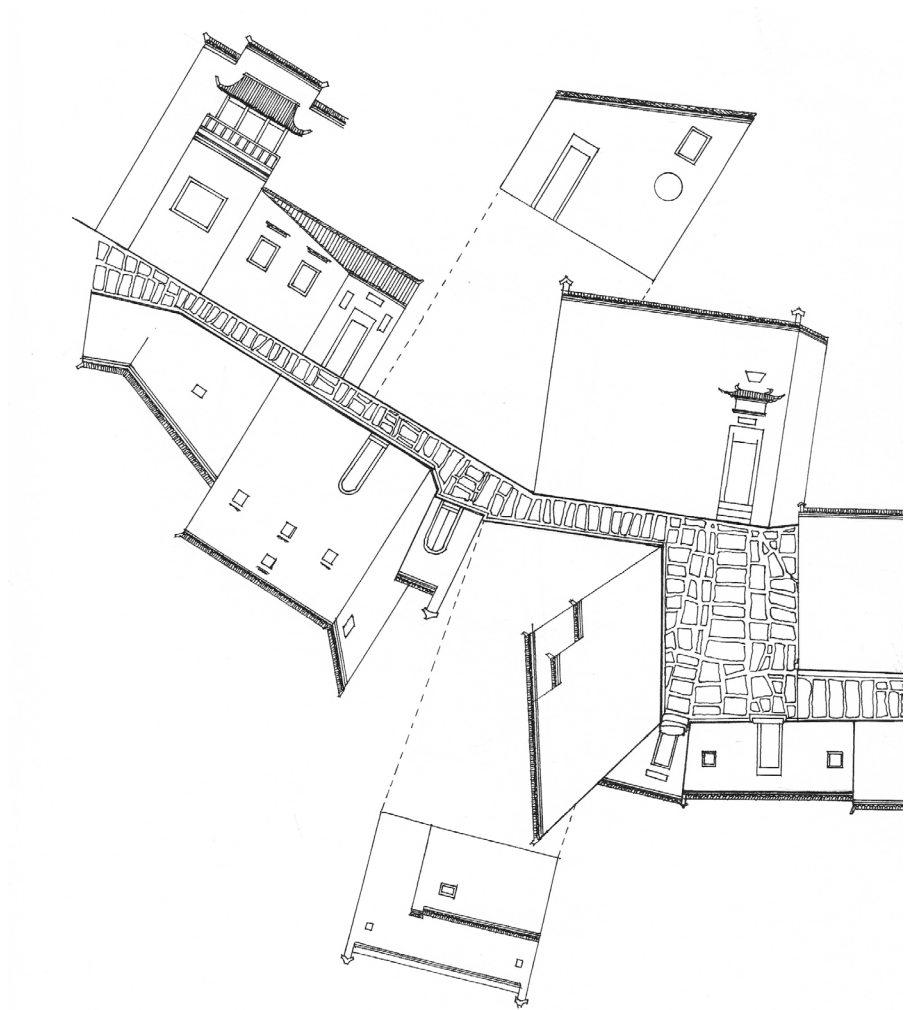


Figure 12. A small open-air plaza in front of Dong Residence in Xidi village, Anhui Province. The traditional village was recognized as a world heritage site in 2000.

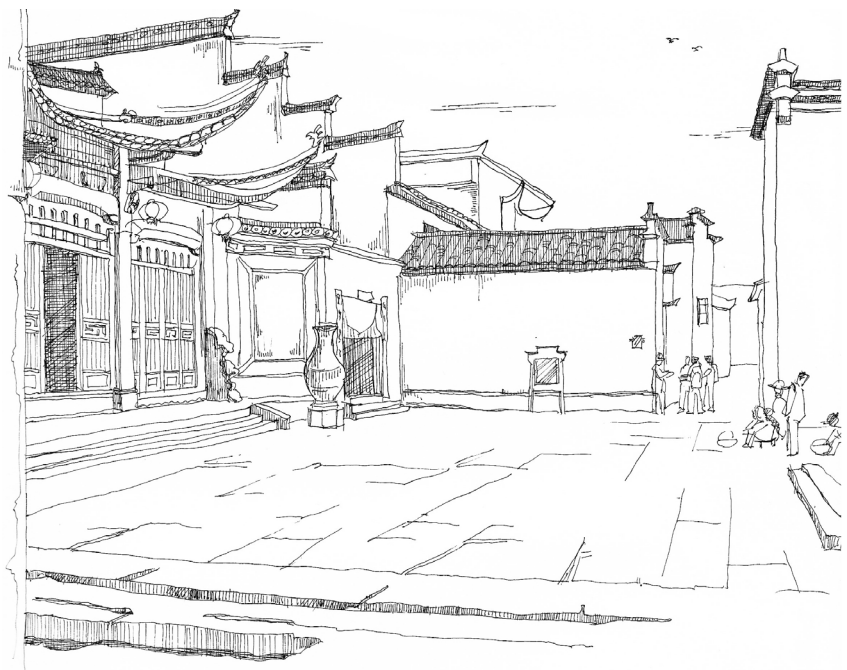


Figure 13. A sketch of Zhuimu tang, the ancestral hall of Xidi village, Anhui Province.

Xiaotong summarized, the Chinese people are “inseparable from the soil.”⁴⁸

Land property is the fundamental issue for understanding the rural village and the villagers.⁴⁹ In order to understand the relationship between land and the villagers, this thesis looks into land ownership in feudal society. Feudal land ownership in China consisted of three parts: state land ownership, landlord land ownership, and peasant land ownership.⁵⁰ The feudal government directly owns parts of the land. *Huangzhuang* (皇庄, imperial estate), *Wangtian* (王田, imperial land), *Juntun* (军屯, military land) were all kinds of lands that had been in the control of the government. The ownership of the lands not only ensured the luxury of the ruling class, but also consolidated state power for they provided the economic foundation of the empire. The feudal government managed the state by controlling large amounts of the land. The villagers also owned their private lands, even though these consisted of mostly small properties. Landowners owned more lands than the peasants, and rented land to the peasants for agricultural production. Private ownership

⁴⁸ Andrea Ianka, “China: A hydrological History,” *Nature* (2016.8) 536:28-29.

⁴⁹ Yan Mo. “The Relationship Between Rural Residents and The Land,” UrbanChina, accessed April 2, 2017. <http://www.urbanchina.org/n/2013/1104/c369540-23426711.html>.

⁵⁰ Gang Zhao and Zhongyi Chen, *Zhongguo tu di zhi du shi* 中国土地制度史 [A History of Chinese Land Ownership System], in *Tu di suo you quan zhi* 土地所有权制 [Land Ownership System]. (Xinxing chu ban she, 2006).

allowed land sales and mergers, which enlarged the power of the landlord economy.⁵¹

2.3 Key finding: Village Community

Kinship bonds, territorial bonds, a self-sufficient economy, and isolation from other villages made “village community” an enclosed and stabilized society. The endogenous social order effectively organized the relationship between community members who lived closely to each other in the village. The social order also allowed the rural society to operate autonomously without much national power required. Therefore, the central government praised the governance policy of “*Wu wei er zhi*” (无为而治)⁵² in the majority of rural villages. The village community had its own spontaneous rules and identity.

The residents owned their own lands and houses. Individual households were self-sustaining, yet at the same time, relied on each other during social activities happened in fixed public places. Another social connection manifested itself during the construction of residences, an activity that had significant mean-

⁵¹ Zhao and Chen, *Zhongguo tu di zhi du shi*, 23.

⁵² Xuefeng He, “On the Logic of Rural Governance in Twentieth-Century China 试论二十世纪中国乡村的逻辑,” *Rural China: An International Journal of History and Social Science* 5(2007): 157.

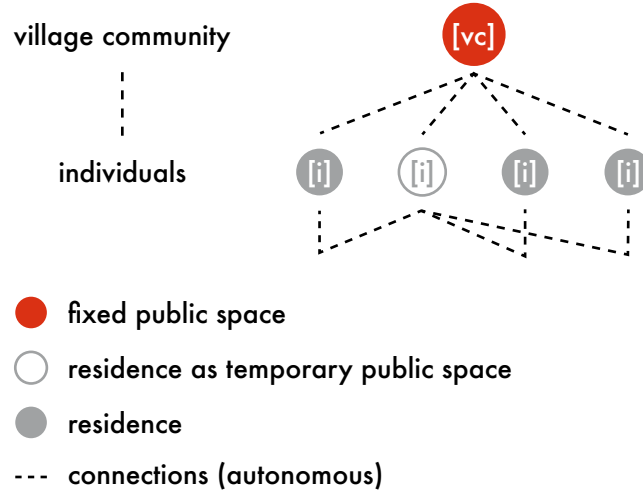


Figure 14. Social structure of "village community."

ing to rural residents. The construction activities generated new community members and allowed private space to temporarily become an area or "surface" for collective participation, and as a result, maintained the social bonds within the village community. (Figure 14)

"Commune" : From 1958 to 1978

The second period this thesis analyzes is from 1958 to 1978, which is known as the era of collectivism. The foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949 entirely ended the decades-old social turmoil and brought an end to the remnants of feudal society. Starting in 1958, the Great Leap Forward was a historic turning in China's history. The compulsory state control brought unprecedentedly change to the traditional social structure of rural society. The previously autonomous village community has become a part of the national institution, which was the basic unit of the national administrative system. The social transformation led to changes in rural life, traditional vernacular architecture, and space. Life and production have both become extremely public and political. It is crucial to capture how the traditional vernacular has changed and to understand the forces that drove these changes.

However, there have been limited resources documenting the changes in vernacular buildings. Therefore, this thesis tries to

depict the key architectural and spatial features based on records of the collective and political life.

This chapter first introduces the people's commune, which was the social system during this period, and then analysis the architectural and spatial typologies in response to social transformation.

3.1 An Introduction of “Commune”

The second model this thesis studies is the “commune.” “Commune” is a unique organization system in the period of collectivization during the first thirty years of the PRC. It emerged as one of the economic and political institutions of the Communist Party of China (CPC). The government followed the socialist system of the Soviet Union, advocated collectivization, and reorganized the villagers' production and life. In the academic field, collectivization began after the Japanese invasion (1937-1945) when the CPC established mutual aid teams in the anti-Japanese base areas, and ended when the People's Commune⁵³ was replaced by

⁵³ The People's Commune (1958-1983), was born during the Great Leap Forward, when Chairman Mao Zedong had a vision of surpassing the western countries within a short time in terms of industrial production. Chairman Mao also wanted to mobilize rural residents to achieve mass agricultural production.

the Household-responsibility system⁵⁴ in the 1980s.⁵⁵ The forms of the commune developed chronologically through mutual aid team, elementary agricultural cooperative, advanced agricultural cooperative, people's commune.⁵⁶

In the 1950s, national policies focused on urban development. Villages were regarded as the extended surroundings of cities, and as locales for exporting labor and resources to the cities. New facilities, such as schools, hospitals and infrastructure were built in the villages. Agricultural cooperatives (农业合作社), which were social and economic mutual aid organizations, were initiated autonomously by local villagers. These cooperatives functioned only during busy seasons.⁵⁷

During this time, the premise of the agricultural cooperative was the private ownership of land, which means the land properties belonged to individual households. Soon, the small-peasant economy with low agricultural production could not support industrial development. The CPC believed that the cooperatives

⁵⁴ Household-responsibility system was first adopted in 1978, and became prevalent in the early 1980s. It is a system partially supplanted the egalitarian distribution. The latter was the method adopted by during the people's commune era.

⁵⁵ Long Xing 行龙, *Yue dang du shi: Bei fang nong cun de ji ti hua shi dai* 阅档读史 —— 北方农村的集体化时代 [Reading documentation and history: Collectivism in north rural China] (Beijingshi: Beijing da xue chubanshe 北京大学出版社, 2011), 1.

⁵⁶ Xing, *Yue dang du shi*, 1.

⁵⁷ Vermeer, Pieke and Chong, *Cooperative and Collective in China's Rural Development*, 20.

could acquire massive production and common prosperity. In 1953, the national government launched an agricultural cooperation movement. Most of the villages implemented agricultural cooperation by the end of 1956.⁵⁸

During the Great Leap Forward, the national policy not only aimed to accelerate productivity (生产力), but also sought to change the relations of production (生产关系). The national leaders believed that publicity help to speed up the development of productivity. The land ownership changed from private to collective. Only a small proportion of the land remained privately owned (自留地).⁵⁹ Hence, the People's Commune Movement began.

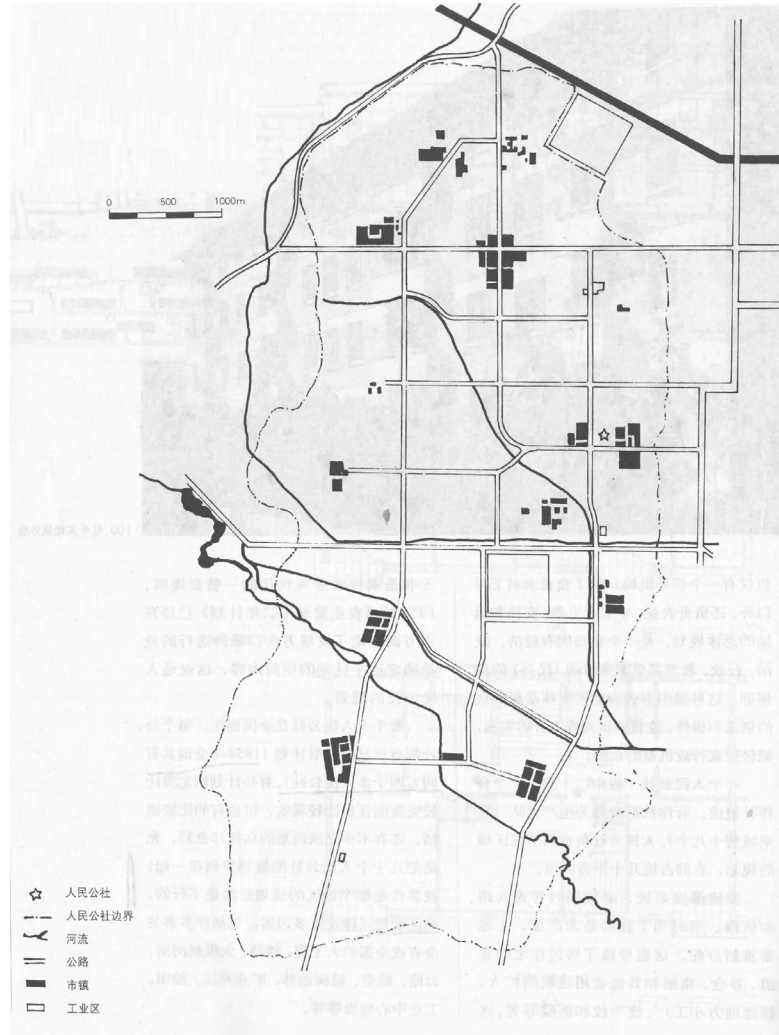
In 1957 and 1958, the construction of infrastructure in the new country, such as water reservoirs, irrigation systems, and transportation systems, required collectivism in rural areas. Some cooperatives within a region worked in tandem and became a larger collective unit.⁶⁰ These agricultural cooperatives were later merged into people's communes. One people's commune

⁵⁸ "Socialist Transformation of Agriculture 农业合作化运动." News of the Communist Party of China, accessed May 1, 2017. <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64156/64157/4512295.html>.

⁵⁹ "Rural People's Commune Regulations (Revised), 1961 农村人民公社工作条例(修正草案) 1961 年," News of the Communist Party of China, accessed May 1, 2017. <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64184/64186/66668/4493484.html>.

⁶⁰ "Opinions on Small Agricultural Cooperatives Combine to Commune (1958) 关于小型农业合作社适当的并为大社的意见 (1958)," News of the Communist Party of China, accessed May 1, 2017. <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64184/64186/66665/4493268.html>.

Figure 15. Dongfeng people's commune, in the suburb of Xi'an city, was combined by 18 agricultural cooperatives. The commune had 13,680 commune members and 1,930 ha. land. Source: *Hua, Reconstruction of China, 2006*.



consisted of twenty to thirty agricultural cooperatives, a process known as *Bing she huo dong* (并社活动). The agricultural cooperatives were later renamed as production brigades. (Figure 15)

The people's commune was the highest of three administrative levels. It was divided into production brigades and production teams. The production team (生产队) was the lowest unit that

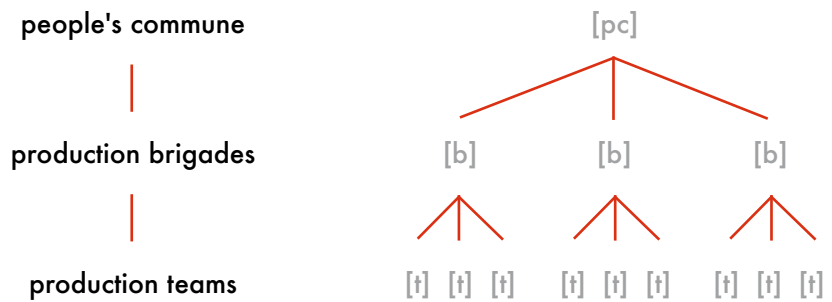


Figure 16. Political administrative structure of people's commune.

organized agricultural production and allocation.⁶¹ (Figure 16) There were approximately 10 households per production team in the 1950s and 1960s; 20 households per production team in the 1970s; 25-30 in the early 1980s before the people's commune collapsed. The average size was 100 people. The households in the same production team worked collectively. Agricultural production and distribution were organized and regulated by the national government based on egalitarian distribution, though some communes distributed based on an individual's contribution to the commune.⁶² The products had to be turned over unconditionally to the nation. Even some of the special policies and privileges of the minority ethnic groups were canceled. The

⁶¹ Production team, the basic unit in the people's commune system (1958-1984), which means it is the lowest level in the administrative hierarchy. The higher levels are production brigade and people's commune. Typically, the team owned most of the land and was responsible of income distribution.

⁶² Yi Xin, "A Brief Comment on the Big Commune Distribution System," *CPC History Studies* 3(2007): 22-43.

people's commune system established the nation's dominant role in rural production, life, and social order.⁶³

Some of the communes showed enthusiasm for development. They were over-engaged in the construction of infrastructure, which resulted in a huge loss in agricultural production.⁶⁴ Three years of natural disaster followed the Great Leap Forward from 1960 to 1962, which led to nationwide economic depression. The government realized the significance of agriculture, and that urbanization should be based on rural and agricultural modernization. The people's commune should not distribute the labor force to non-agricultural work without national authorization. Production brigades and production teams were granted more autonomous rights in order to limit the power of the people's commune.

3.2 Political Ideology of Rural Architecture and Space

In terms of the political control during the time, an important difference in rural construction was the emergence of village planning by the government. This has not been seen in the traditional autonomous village communities. Another feature was the

⁶³ Xing, *Yue dang du shi*, 150.

⁶⁴ Anna Louise Strong, "The Rise of People's Commune in China," in *China's Communes Come of Age* (New York: Marzani and Munsell, 1960), 87.

extreme communal life demanded by the government, which led to great changes in living, public, and production space. This section first introduces village planning at this time, and then residence, public space, and farmland in comparison to their precedence in ancient time.

3.2.1 Planning

People's communes were responsible for the planning of their respective regions, some of which covered about ten square kilometers.⁶⁵

According to the Agricultural Development Plan from 1956 to 1968⁶⁶, the residences were to be re-organized to save more lands for agricultural production; agricultural buildings such as barns and pig sties were to be expanded; Small factories, schools, hospitals and shops and canteens were also to be built in the communes.

By 1958, there were approximately 24,000 people's communes, and each of them had its own development plan. Many of the

⁶⁵ Lanhong Hua, *Chong jian Zhongguo: cheng shi gui hua san shi nian* 重建中国：城市规划30年 [Reconstruction of China: 30 years of urban planning] (Beijing: San lian shu dian, 2006), 85.

⁶⁶ "Outlines of National Development of Agriculture 1956 to 1967 农业发展十二计划：1956年到1967年全国农业发展纲要," NPC, accessed May 1, 2017. http://www.npc.gov.cn/wxzl/gongbao/2000-12/23/content_5000702.htm.

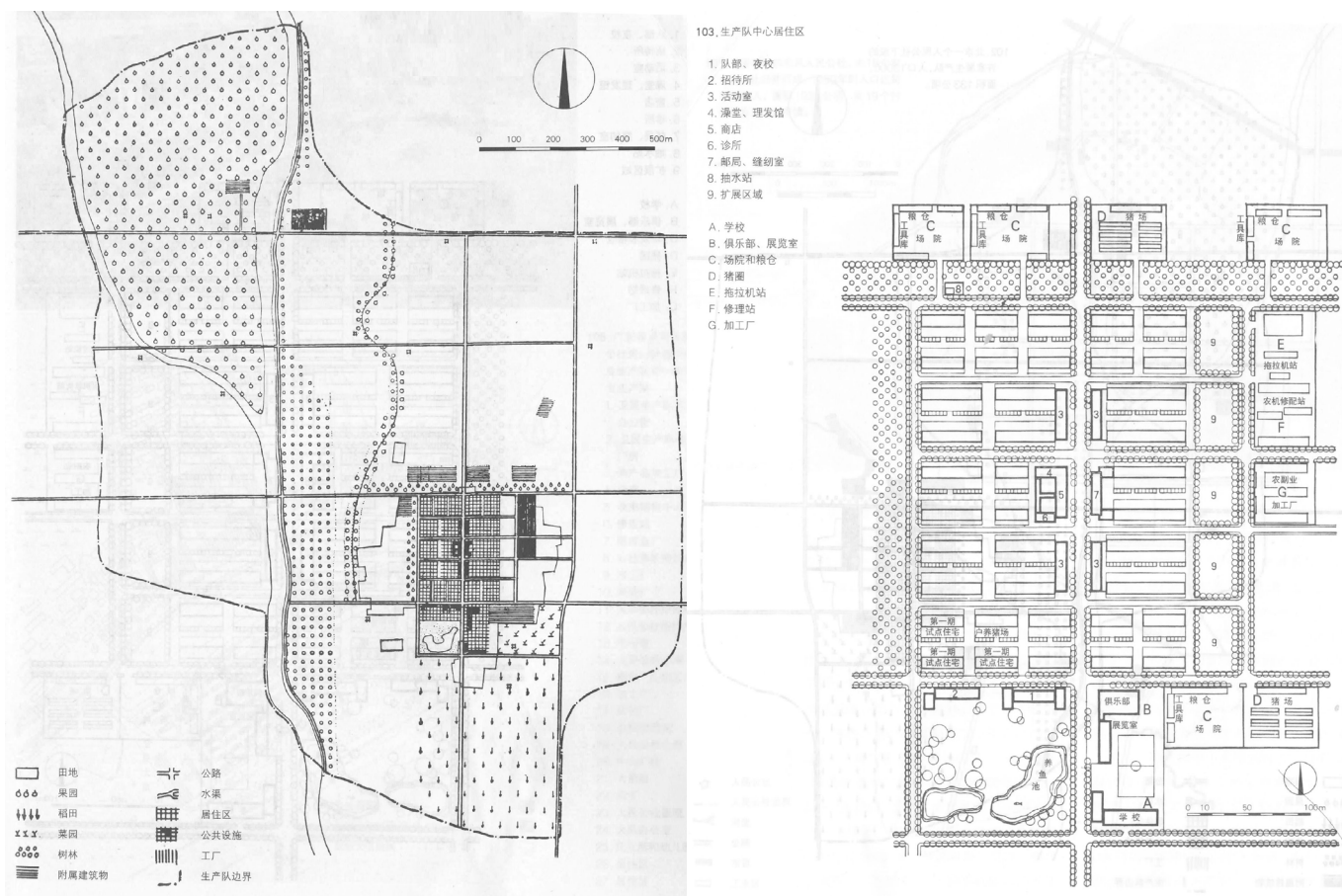


Figure 17. Xujiawu production team of a people's commune in the suburb of Beijing. Source: Hua, *Reconstruction of China*, 2006.

plans were within the scope of a larger regional plan, which included some of the national projects for railways, roads, forestry, mining, and industrial centers.⁶⁷ The new villages and towns, or communes, became the focus of experts' new research interests. The urban planners who only paid attention to the cities began to focus on rural issues. Their research constituted an early model of regional planning in China.⁶⁸ Many of the new villages

⁶⁷ Hua, *Chong jian Zhongguo*, 85.

⁶⁸ Hua, *Chong jian Zhongguo*, 72.

were organized in a “utopian” plan what influenced the form of residential units in the urban areas. (*Figure 17*)

3.2.2 Residence

As previously mentioned, residences were the private properties of the villagers. Only some of the landowners’ houses were confiscated and assigned to poor villagers, or became public facilities, such as schools, hospitals, and agricultural cooperative buildings, during Land Reform in the early 1950s. The rural houses usually had no modern living facilities, such as flush toilets and electricity. Living conditions were relatively poor. The changes in housing came after the improvements in clothing, medical facilities, and education.

Architects and urban planners were sent to the village to help commune members plan and build the commune, though they only stayed a short time before they were asked to come back to the cities for urban planning. These new residences in the communes were built close to each other. Many of them are buildings with two or more storeys. They were designed to obtain more arable land.

Figure 18. A brick commune building in Chaya Weixing People's Commune. *Source: www.chayashan.com.*



Then engineers were sent to the countryside to design the local rural architecture. Modern small reinforced concrete precast components were introduced to the design. Yet, both concrete and wood were more expensive than brick at the time. Therefore, brick construction was popular in rural areas because they satisfied the urgency of the benefit-driven ideology. The architectural form was greatly simplified: bricks replaced the traditional wood structure; architectural decoration disappeared; in some places, the pitched roofs were replaced by flat roofs. (Figure 18)

As urbanization gradually increased during the early 1960s, the rural labor force in the cities returned to the countryside. Many of the workers were experienced in masonry urban construc-

tion.⁶⁹ They helped to build the “modern” masonry houses once the economy revived and the villagers began to renovate or build new residences.

3.2.3 Public Space

The Communes emphasized collectivism and agricultural production. Therefore, the rural public space was seen as a locale for delivering the political ideology. Public buildings or space included: farmlands, open-air assembly areas, cooperative buildings, canteens and so on. Public space during this period was used extensively. This is because the commune members lived extremely communally both in work and personal life.

During Cultural Revolution, many of the traditional social events and public activities were banned. Some of the cultural relics and heritage were also destroyed. *Miaohui* (庙会, Chinese New Year temple fairs), family tree, the renovation of ancestral temples and halls, *fengshui*, ritual ceremonies, were all considered as feudalistic superstitions and old thoughts, which should be criticized.⁷⁰ (Figure 19) Meanwhile, the campaign of “Learn from

⁶⁹ Rukun, Zhao, “A Study on the Transfer of China’s Rural Labor in the 1950s and 1960s,” *CPC History Studies* 1(2009): 42-49.

⁷⁰ The term “four olds” first appeared on June 1, 1966, in People’s Daily editorial, “Sweep Away All Monsters and Demons,” where the old things were described as anti-proletarian, “fostered by the exploiting classes, and to have poisoned the minds of the people for thousands of years.” However, which customs, cultures, habits, and ideas specifically constituted the “four

Figure 19. A scene of Miaohui in Huaiyang. The photo was taken in 1900.



Dazhai in Agriculture”⁷¹ encouraged the villagers all over China to learn from the villagers in Dazhai Village, Shanxi Province, who made considerable self-sacrifice in the name of public and political activity. There were all kinds of political studies and assemblies. The weekend market was regarded as a symbol of capitalism and eliminated, as were other traditions and practices.

The thesis considers three iconic typologies of public space: the commune canteen, supply and marketing cooperatives, and the auditorium, as examples to understand the new social structure and commune members’ relationships.

olds: were never clearly defined. Xing Lu, *Rhetoric of the Chinese Cultural Revolution: The Impact on Chinese Thought, Culture, and Communication* (University of South Carolina Press), 61-62.

⁷¹ “Learn from Dazhai in Agriculture” is a campaign started from 1963, and grew in importance after the beginning of Culture Revolution in 1967. It was organized by Chairman Mao Xedong to encourage peasants from all over the nation to follow Dazhai by practicing self-sacrifice and political activity.

(1) Commune Canteen

The production team evolved from advanced agricultural cooperatives, and became the basic unit in the administrative system after the Great Leap Forward. The most representative feature was the commune canteen from 1958 to 1961. Each production team had its own commune canteen, where all the team members would eat together for free and without limitation. In the communist style, the canteen was also called “communist canteen.” “Run to the Communism!” was one of the famous propaganda slogans this period.⁷²

The commune canteens organized and managed the daily diet of the commune members, in order to realize the collective life of the members and the socialization of household work. By eating in the canteen, women were liberated from housework, so that they could concentrate on agricultural production. In this way, the communes improved labor productivity (劳动力) and the utilization ratio of labor force (劳动生产率). Certain commune members were responsible for management; account books were open to the public. The members used meal tickets and were divided into groups to get food. The everyday menu was set ahead of time and based on nutritional recipes. And the recipes were

⁷² Pinghan Luo, “A Myth of 1958: Run to the Communism,” People, accessed May 1, 2017. <http://history.people.com.cn/n/2014/1028/c372327-25921605.html>.



Figure 20. The chefs were distributing food in canteen for commune members. *Source: www.ifeng.com.*

adjusted to the kind of work expended in agricultural production. For example, during the busy season, the recipe contained more staple foods with carbohydrates, while during slack reason, it offered more vegetables. (Figure 20)

The canteen building, on the other hand, was not so carefully designed compared to the forms of organization and management. The emphasis was on affordability. It could be adapted from the old houses. The furnishings were as simple as possible.

The commune canteen was meant to be based on strict management and dining order. It helped transform traditional private activities to highly collective behavior. But the utopian socialist

ideal could not ally with the productive forces of the time. The main reason was the villagers ordered more food than they needed, and caused waste, causing many of the canteens to run out of funds later on.⁷³ The organization system of the commune canteen finally broke up in 1961 when the Three Years of Natural Disaster started. This process was known as “*xia fang shi tang*” (下放食堂).⁷⁴

(1) Supply and Marketing Cooperatives (供销合作社)

The supply and marketing cooperative was the commercial institution that was set up to ensure rural production and to meet life requirement. It was first founded in 1950. By the end of 1952, supply and marketing cooperatives were prevalent in rural China. This provided production tools, articles of daily use, and purchased agricultural products and sideline products. The cooperative had a dominant role in rural economic life during the first thirty years of PRC. It was the economic built of exchange in rural villages.⁷⁵

The cooperative buildings usually have linear plans and are one to two storeys. The ground floor is for commercial use, and the

⁷³ “People’s Daily Editorial 1958: Proper Operation and Management of Public Canteens 《人民日报》1958 年社论：办好公共食堂,” People’s Daily Overseas Edition, accessed May 1, 2017. <http://news.163.com/05/1205/13/247A12L4000113DU.html>.

⁷⁴ Ming Mao, *The Revival of China* 复兴记 (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017), 454.

⁷⁵ “60 Years of Chinese Supply and Marketing Cooperatives 中国合作供销社 60 年,” Chinese Supply and Marketing Cooperatives Net, accessed May 1, 2017. <http://www.chinacoop.gov.cn/HTML/2009/10/09/34756.html>.



Figure 21. A cooperative building in Xingyi, Guizhou Province.

upper floor is used for storage or dormitory. Commune members use “tickets” (票 据) instead of money to buy the production tools, agricultural products and daily necessities. There are all sorts of tickets, for example, chair tickets to exchange chairs, candle tickets for candles. All the tickets are distributed by the commune. Commune members turn in yuanliang or *gongliang* (援 粮 , 或 公 粮 , grain delivered to the state) in the cooperatives. In this way, cooperatives provided an important connection between the national government and village populations. (Figure 21)

(2) Auditorium and Open-air Assembly Areas

Commune members worked eight hours each day on weekdays.



Figure 22. Commune members were watching movies in an open-air assembly area in Hubei Province.
Source: Han Xuezhong, 1963.

The timetable was established by the production team based on seasons.⁷⁶ After work and dinner in the canteen, the members were required to participate in political studies in the auditoriums by reading newspapers and documents, holding assemblies or watching propaganda movies. Some communes also projected movies in the open-air assembly areas. (Figure 22)

3.2.4 Farmland

All the properties of agricultural cooperatives were owned without exception by the people's commune after 1958. As previously mentioned, the people's commune was organized in three

⁷⁶ Jianhua Gao, "Life in a Production Team 生产队里那些事," Yuhang Annals, accessed May 1, 2017. <http://www.yhsz.gov.cn/newsshowqk.aspx?classid=437&artid=28019>.

levels from top to down: the people's commune, production brigade and production team. The land, and all other production resources, have three kinds of ownership: commune-owned, production brigade-owned and production team-owned. This was different from the ownership system in the ancient times, when the land was owned by the state, the landlords, and the peasants.

Even though the land was owned collectively, the government allowed each commune member to maintain a small private lot, which was from 5% to 7% area of land that the production team owned.⁷⁷ However, during Cultural Revolution, the private lot was confiscated and family small business were banned. This impaired significantly the enthusiasm of agricultural production of the villagers.⁷⁸

3.3 Key Findings:

The Decline of Village Community and the Control of the National Institution

In the context of the PRC's economic development and construction, the new formal organization – the people's communes –

⁷⁷ "Rural People's Commune Regulations (Revised), 1961 农村人民公社工作条例 (修正草案) 1961 年," News of the Communist Party of China, accessed May 1, 2017.

⁷⁸ Hongle Liao 廖洪乐, "Sixty Years of Chinese Rural Land Ownership 中国农村土地制度六十年 " in *1958-1978 Rural Land System: Collective Ownership*, (Zhongguo cai zheng jing ji chu ban she 中国财政经济出版社, 2008)

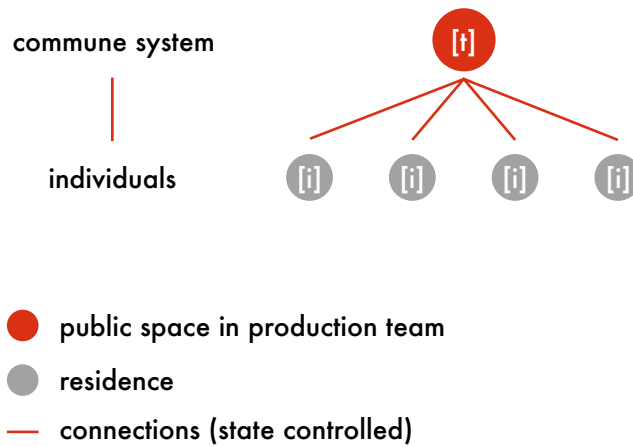


Figure 23. Social structure of "commune."

resettled in compulsory administration through communes, production brigade, production team. The national government also changed land ownership from private to collective, and executed unified management. The collectivization weakened the social and personal identity of individual villagers. Individual values and identities could only be achieved through contributions to the commune. The commune was an administrative concept. It interrupted or replaced the traditional village community. The original organizational structure was retained in varying degrees. In some cases, where different communities were merged into a new commune, the original community no longer existed. (Figure 23)

The organization system of the people's communes and the collective ownership of the land rendered the lives of rural villagers highly collectivized. The commune members were forced to comply with the unified schedule made by the production team. They farmed or carried out construction activities together during daytime, ate together at the commune canteens, and pursued political study collectively at night. Private space and spontaneous social activities were largely reduced, and many traditional social activities were banned.

Unlike traditional village communities, residences no longer had a dominant role; instead the public space and the infrastructure became most dominant. This new system and land tenure ensured the stable and rapid implementation of collective service facilities and large-scale infrastructure. Collective land was levied by the state at a low cost. The state could mobilize the commune members to carry out construction activities easily. These were the advantages that could not be achieved through the privatization of land. In addition, rural construction of public facilities and infrastructure laid the foundation for rapid development in the post-commune period.

"Household Individualization": From 1978 to the Present

From 1978 to the present is the third time period of this thesis research. 1978 marked an historical turn for contemporary China. The people's commune was replaced by the household-responsibility system. The household-responsibility system encouraged the residents' self-development. As a result, collectivism was replaced by greater individualism. This resulted in a boom in new construction and architectural modernization in the rural areas. Meanwhile, preservation of vernacular architecture in rural villages has gradually become more valued by society.

This chapter analyzes this post 1978 period, in order to investigate the new forms of rural architecture and space emerging from a transforming social context, exploring the dialectic between modernization and tradition, and the tension between individuals and the formal state administrative control.

4.1 An Introduction of the Post-Commune Transformation

Rural transition in the post-commune period was driven by two main forces: modernization in economic development, and the appeal for democratization in politics.⁷⁹ National controls and the market are leading the social, economic, and political transformation.

In 1978, the People's Commune came to an end and was replaced by the Household-Responsibility System, which allows households to contract agricultural land, machinery, and other facilities from a collective organization.⁸⁰ Even though the land is still held collectively instead of privately, the right of use now belongs to the villagers. The households are able to decide within the limits set by the contract, and are free to arrange the surplus production after submitting the required national and collective quotas. A famous quote of the time stated, "turn in enough to the country, leave enough for the collective, and the rest is for ourselves."⁸¹ Coming right after three decades of man-

⁷⁹ Wu, *Political Space and Political Transition in Rural China*, 6.

⁸⁰ Household-Responsibility System. It is first experimented in Xiaogang village in 1979, and is prevalently executed all over the country by the end of 1984. From 1978 to 1984, which is the transition period, production teams of the people's communes have been dismissed into three to five village groups (about 25-30 people). The village group is similar to the elementary agricultural cooperatives. "1983: Household Responsibility System," China.Org.Cn, accessed May 1, 2017. http://www.china.org.cn/features/60years/2009-09/16/content_18534697.htm.

⁸¹ "Turn over enough amount to the country, leave enough for the collective, and the rest left for own." "交够国家的，留足集体的，剩下都是自己的。" Office of the State Council Comprehensive Rural Reform Working, *Research Report on Comprehensive Rural Reform* 农村综合改革研究报告 (Zhongguo cai zheng jing ji chu ban she, 2010)

datory collectivism, the household-responsibility system sparked the enthusiasm of rural residents. The economy has largely been developed with increasing numbers of self-employed rural craftsmen, traders and entrepreneurs.⁸²

From the early 1990s, the state-driven market economy⁸³ has gradually taken over the state-driven planning economy. Urban expansion occupies large amounts of arable lands in the village, which leads to fluctuations in the prices of agricultural products. Rural development has been slow in the context of rapid urbanization and marketization. The village can no longer be self-sufficient anymore because of the loss of arable land; simultaneously, it has to contribute resources to urban development.

Seeing the low incomes from cultivation and greater opportunities in the cities, more and more rural people have immigrated to urban areas. These immigrants are known as rural workers⁸⁴ (农民工). Though the *Hukou system*⁸⁵ differentiate the rural and urban identification. Even though rural residents could work in

⁸² Vermeer, Peike, and Chong, *Cooperative and Collective in China's Rural Development*, 240.

⁸³ The market economy is a concept in the capitalism countries. Though the characteristics of contemporary Chinese economy is the market economy in the control/adjust of socialism.

⁸⁴ Rural workers, or Mingong (民工) are migrant workers in China, who are rural resident travelling from the countryside to the cities to work.

⁸⁵ *Hukou system* (中华人民共和国户籍制度, 户口制) is a record in a government system of household registration required by law in mainland China. It identifies a person as a resident of an area and other personal information. It especially differentiates rural and urban residency status.

the cities, they could not equally avail themselves of the social welfare or resources provided to urban residents. Rural residents could not purchase houses in the cities nor could their children go to the schools in the city for compulsory education. They were a marginalized group of people in the city, many of them had to return to their hometowns after ten years. As a result, the villagers were alienated from both the rural land and the city.

Other rural residents who immigrated with their families to cities, who considered leaving their land forever, often transferred their land to the village committee⁸⁶ or other local residents. The residences often fell into disrepair without people living in them and maintaining the structures. In some cases, the houses were transferred along with the land. Sometimes when families had urgent need for money – for example, for surgery and children's education – they would rent their land or transfer the right of use.

The changes in rural physical environment and population raised the attention of the national government from the late twentieth

⁸⁶ Village committees became the basic autonomous organization in the administrative villages after the people's commune was canceled. In 1982, the Constitution of China recognized the legal position of the village committee. According to the Organic Law of Village Committee, the committee is responsible for managing the collective properties of the village; supporting the villagers to develop all kinds of family production and business; organizing village planning, infrastructure construction and direct the villagers in building residences. It is the foundation of China's democratization. It acts an intermediate role between the state and the individual combining administrative duties with partial autonomy. Wu, *Political Space and Political Transition in Rural China*, 242.

eth-century. In 2005, the Fifth Plenary Session of the 16th CPC Central Committee proposed the construction of a new Socialist Countryside, focusing on the development of farming and rural society. The goal was to avoid the loss of rural characteristics, and to prevent them from becoming a form of micro-city. In addition, the meeting proposed strategies, such as the development of rural tourism, promotion of rural infrastructure construction, and scientific planning. In order to foster rural people's sense of belonging, to attract rural laborers back to the village, and to encourage agricultural production, the national government of the PRC abolished the agricultural tax in 2006. The cancellation of this tax encouraged the autonomy of the village communities.⁸⁷ At the same time, many Provinces initiated the "Beautiful rural construction action plan"⁸⁸ to speed up the construction of a new Socialist Countryside, in order to achieve increased production and improved quality of life, and to realize ecological goals.

Preservation of vernacular architecture and the traditional village became increasingly important from the 2000s onward in these government plans. With the transformations of more than half a century, some of the villages have developed into towns; some

⁸⁷ He, *Diqian de luoji*, 138.

⁸⁸ Beautiful rural construction action plan, also known as The Beautiful Countryside, is a plan as a part of the new Socialist Countryside construction which proposed on the CPC's sixteenth session of the Fifth Plenary Session. The beautiful rural construction action plan focuses on "development of production, rural civilization, village environment, and rural democracy."

are under transition, simultaneously possessing urban and rural characters; and many still depend on a small-scale peasant economy, falling behind urban areas. Most vernacular architecture remaining is scattered in less developed rural areas, or regions inhabited by ethnic minority groups. And they are usually in building groups or villages. Preservation in these villages has been identified as an opportunity for development. This unique vernacular culture has the potential to attract tourists, especially as a growing middle-class in the cities has stimulated tourism in recent years.

4.2 Architectural and Spatial Transformation

This thesis identifies two construction waves in the post-commune era. The first one was in the early 1980s, when the economy recovered shortly after the people's commune, and the second one started from the early twentieth-century, when the central government proposed the construction of a new Socialist Countryside. The new forms of architecture that appeared in the two construction waves were, in fact, a result of government action.

In the 1980s, with the implementation of various policies and

the rapid development of rural production by the state, rural residents urgently sought to improve living conditions. This resulted in the first construction wave in rural areas.

The second wave in rural construction started from the implementation of the state-driven market economy and “developing the new Socialist Countryside” in the new millennium. It is not like “The Great Leap Forward,” which permanently resulted in simple brick buildings; now the ideological program promotes a high degree of efficiency and industrialization. However, in order to attract investment and tourism opportunities, there has also been rapid construction of antique-looking rural buildings. The new buildings are only beautified on the exterior, and such buildings are homogenous all over the country.

Seeing the irrational construction, Chairman Xi Jinping advocated preservation of traditional culture in the countryside, “to achieve urban-rural integration, and to construct beautiful villages, is to give local residents greater benefits, instead of spending money on unnecessary efforts, for example, ‘smearing powder’ (涂脂抹粉), which is to cover the dilapidated walls with white paints. The traditional villages should be protected, but not be demolished.” This is different from the idea in Mao’s village in

the 1950s, which was to demolish for new construction.⁸⁹

This section examines architectural changes of rural residence, public space and working space, and new architectural typologies emerged in this two construction waves.

4.2.1 Residence

Fei Xiaotong revisited Kaixiangong village⁹⁰ in 1983 and wrote “not only are most of the villagers living in the same houses in which they lived in 1936, but those houses now appear rather more dilapidated than in 1936 and are providing shelter for a much larger number of people.”⁹¹ The phenomenon was prevalent all over rural areas in the early 1980s. With the implementation of various policies and the rapid development of rural production, rural residents urgently required improved living conditions. They began building new houses after the Chinese Economic Reform.

⁸⁹ “There is no construction without destruction 要建设就要破坏” was an idea Chairman Mao brought up in the 1950s. Joseph W. Esherick, Paul G. Pickowicz, and Andrew G. Walder, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution as History* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2006), 66.

⁹⁰ Kaixiangong village in Qidu Town, Wujiang, Suzhou City, was the case study village of Fei Xiaotong’s dissertation, *Peasant Life in China*, in 1938. This village became an entry for Chinese and foreign scholars to understand rural China.

⁹¹ Xiaotong Fei, *Zhi zai fu min: cong yan hai dao bian qu de kao cha* 志在富民：从沿海到边区的考察 (Shanghai: Shanghai ren min chu ban she, 2007), 204.

Noticing the needs for new construction, the central government launched a nationwide rural housing design competition from 1980 to 1981, to provide reference materials for local construction institutions and architectural schools. Architects, rural craftsmen, and other people participated in the competition and submitted about 6,500 plans.⁹² They were required to consider the vernacular architectural forms and local traditions, as well as modern living requirements, such as inserting the function of household part-time businesses.⁹³ The villagers were invited to comment on the proposals. To popularize the designs, the China Academy of Building Research Institute compiled “rural construction and planning examples.” A total of ninety-two cases of rural settlements and various types of buildings, including the south, north, and some ethnic minority areas, were selected for the construction, management, and planning of rural housing construction. (Figure 24) (Figure 25) The new rural housings based on these references were more prevalent in the economically developed areas.

The national policies continued to influence the rural environment. Since 2005, the national government has paid more attention to rural development. Local governments have gradually

⁹² Ronald G. Knapp, *China's Traditional Rural Architecture: A Cultural Geography of the Common House* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press), 135.

⁹³ Knapp, *China's Traditional Rural Architecture*, 135.

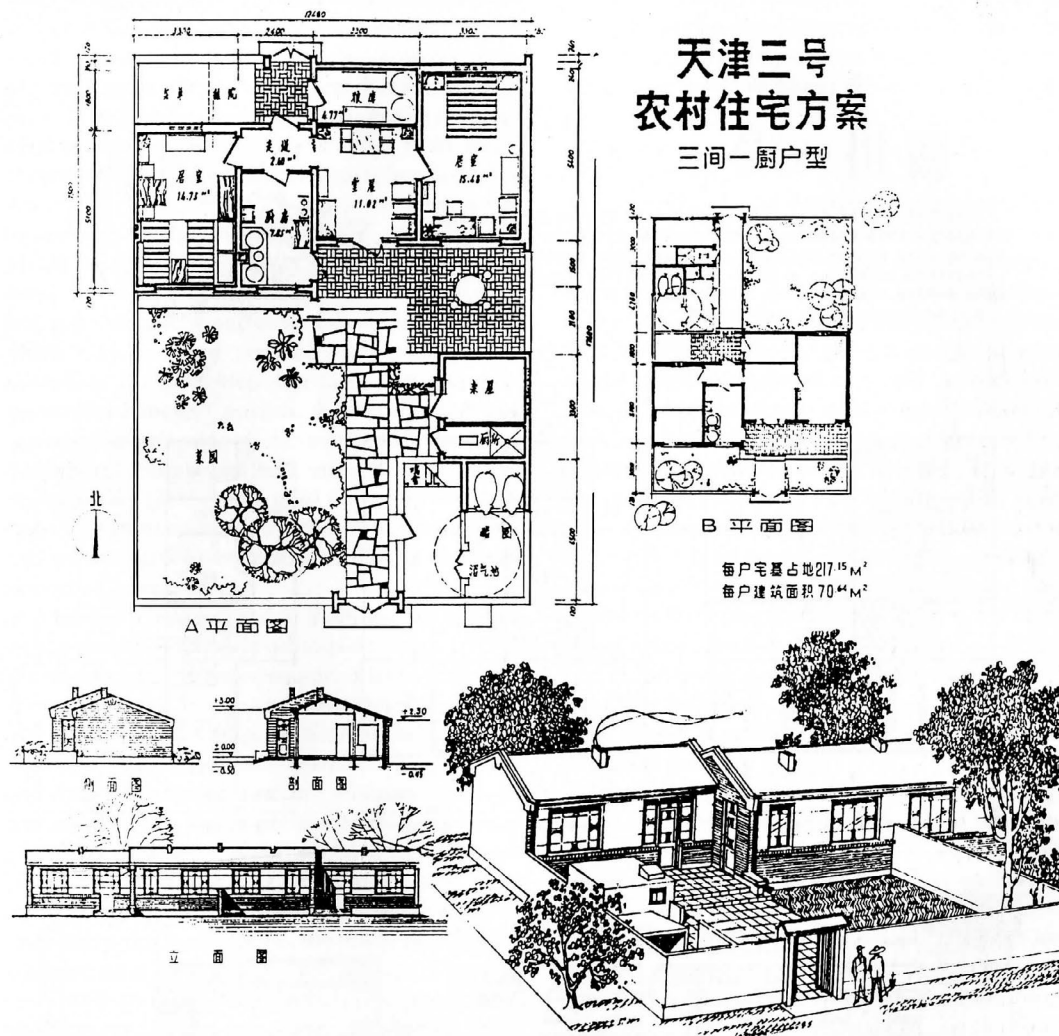


Figure 24. First Prize design for a modern dwelling for north rural China. It was named as Tianjin No.3, a single-story dwelling includes three jian and a kitchen. Plan A (on the upper left) has the pigsty and latrine in front adjacent to the kitchen garden; Plan B (on the upper right) places them in the rear, giving only a small open space in front. Source: Knapp, *China's Traditional Rural Architecture*, 1986.

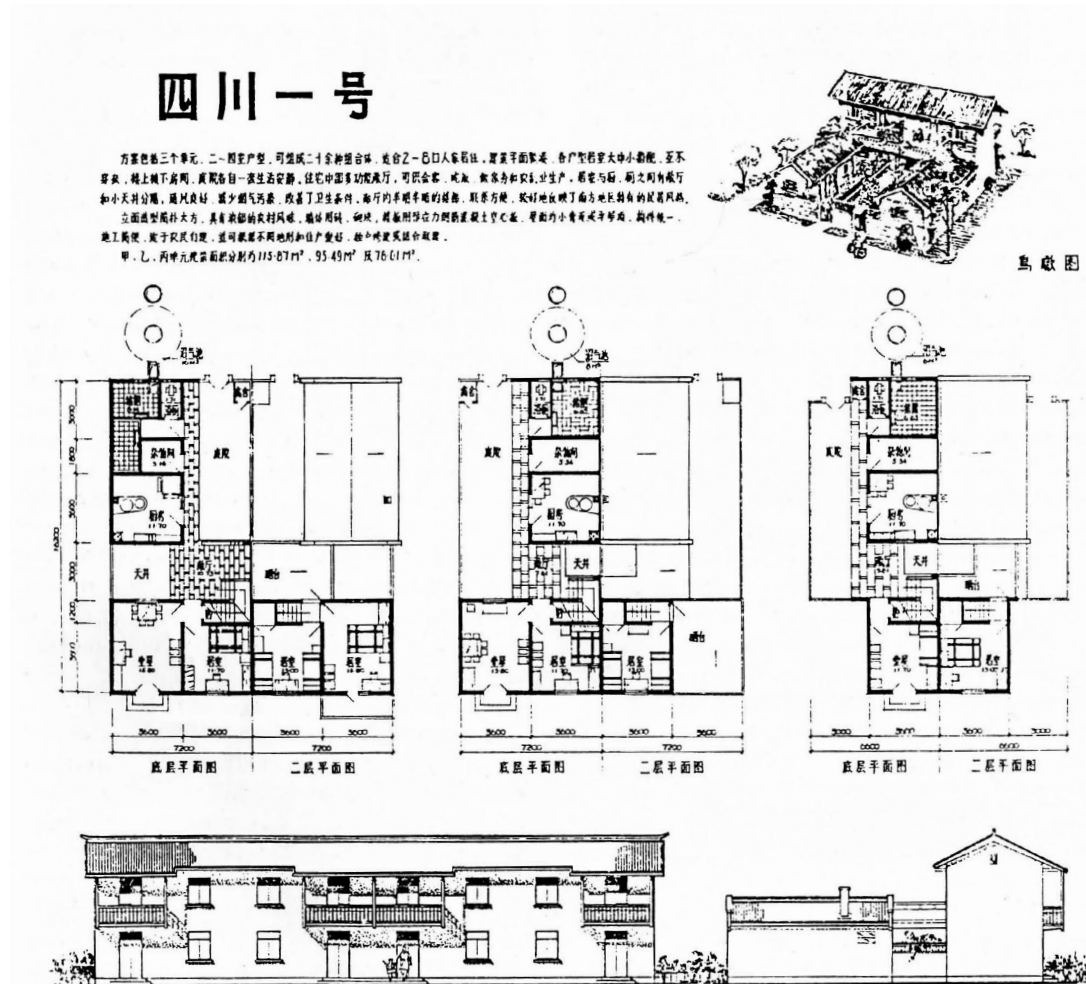


Figure 25. First Prize design for a modern dwelling for south rural China. It was named as Sichuan No.1, which has a two-story living area joined to a single-story building containing the kitchen, storage area, bathing facilities, and pigpen. Source: Knapp, *China's Traditional Rural Architecture*, 1986.

recognized the importance of vernacular culture, which is a way to attract tourism and achieve the national goal of economic development. Vernacular architecture and the village spatial environment have been esteemed as the visual elements that give communities uniqueness. Therefore, building renovations or new constructions are more likely to use local materials, construction methods, and decorative elements. However, many areas appropriate building styles from other famous historical villages as a way of “building the countryside more like the countryside.”⁹⁴ For example, the new constructions in Xiafengshan village, Guangxi Province in southwestern China, attached gables that are typical of the traditional buildings in Hongcun, Anhui Province, in southeastern China, to their own brick houses. (Figure 26) Hongcun is a village that was recognized as a world heritage site in 2000, and it is well known for its unique decorated gables. (Figure 27) The local government of Xiafengshan appropriated this exotic traditional form to local buildings as a symbol of cultural richness.⁹⁵

This kind of new Socialist Countryside construction is planned by the companies hired by the local government and built by

⁹⁴ “Building the countryside more like the countryside,” translated from “把乡村建设的更像乡村,” is a book by Sun Jun and Liao Xingchen. It was used by planners as a principle to build rural village based on the impression their ideal countryside.

⁹⁵ “New Socialist Countryside Construction in Guilin: Primitive and Modern, an Experiment in Lingui Village 桂林新农村建设报道：古朴与现代 临桂一个新农村的实验,” Xinhua Net, accessed May 1, 2017. http://www.gx.xinhuanet.com/dtzx/guilin/2014-01/03/c_118819185.htm.



Figure 26. The walls and gables in Xiaofengshan village imitated the style from Anhui Province. *Source: Xinhua Net.*



Figure 27. The image shows the forms of walls and gables, which are vernacular to Xidi village, Anhui Province.

construction teams. The top-down development hardly involves the village community.

4.2.2 Public Space

After the People's Commune, many of the traditional rural public events that were banned during the commune era, have been recovered. For example, the weekend market, which was held weekly in rural villages before the commune era, has been revived since 1982.⁹⁶ Compulsory collective activities have been replaced by personal life. The villagers do not need to do farm work collectively and follow a strict time schedule. Instead, they have been able to farm individually and develop household part-time businesses. The family kitchens are used once again, leaving the canteens abandoned or adapted to other uses. The collective consciousness has been weakened because the national government encourages the villages to be autonomous as a way to develop the economy.

On the other hand, the state-driven market economy has provided an impulse of urbanization, which attracted huge numbers of rural laborers to the city. At the same time, the modern facilities

⁹⁶ "Household-responsibility System," Zhongguo Ganbu Xuexi Wang, accessed May 1, 2017. <http://study.ccln.gov.cn/danganziliao/laozhaopian/197383.shtml>.

provide villagers a new way of life. For example, mass media, such as television, allows the villagers to obtain information and entertainment at home. The residents no longer rely on face-to-face interactions for exchanging information. Electricity, and the popularization of the washing machine, enable the housewives to wash clothes at home. They no longer need to stop by wells or rivers, which, in the traditional village, creates the opportunities for social connections.

As a result, in the post-commune era, even though some aspects of traditional public life have been revived, not all of them have been, because the market and social transformations have led to increasing individualization of rural society. The meaning of public space and events has been decreased.

Since 2005, “beauty-show projects” have been erected all over the country, which are the results of the local government’s response to the national government’s call for the construction of the new Socialist Countryside. These projects are often based on technical specifications instead of local condition. Parks have become the new public space for residents’ everyday leisure and recreation. The “purpose-built” space was successful because of the compulsory force from the government during the people’s

Figure 28. A new plaza in Dongshan village for New Socialist Countryside construction, Fujian Province.
Source: Xinhua Net.



commune era. However, due to the new autonomy and individualism seen in the rural village, this kind of public space is not highly used by the local residents. (Figure 28)

Another kind of public space for the tourist industry has become popular in the villages, especially those villages that have rich natural and cultural resources. New rural space has been created for the tourists, which should be categorized as tourism public space. Parks and cultural plazas are typical in this kind of space. (Figure 29) Most of the new space is neither built for nor used by the local residents.



Figure 29. A performance plaza built for tourism in Louna village, Wanfenglin, Guizhou Province.

4.2.3 Production Space and Working Space

As aforementioned, the villagers have had more freedom in life and production since the 1980s. Large numbers of young laborers were forced move to the cities, and the residents who have stayed in the village have been actively developing household part-time businesses, which mainly consist of family-led farming and breeding. The prosperity created by these small businesses prompts the rural residents to look outward and to become more modernized and individualized.

Many villages no longer rely solely on agricultural production. The rural villages can be further categorized by their major

industry, such as tourism. Rural tourism occurs not only in traditional villages, but also in new resort villages with attractive natural landscapes in the countryside.

4.2.4 Commercial Space

Commercial space in the rural village is much simpler than that in the cities. Commercial consumption in rural areas not only involves the purchase of daily consumer goods, but also new amenities (such as restaurants) suggesting a transition in life style and production forms.

With the implementation of the household-responsibility system and the opening of the rural market, there has been freedom in rural individuality, which has led to prosperity in rural economies. Since the 1980s, small shops have emerged in the villages because of improved transportation infrastructure. The supply and marketing cooperatives suffered a major crisis in losing their leading economic dominance in the life and production of the villagers.

Rural villagers in contemporary China are self-managing and self-financing, in order to leverage their economic interests,

which is also known as the “individual economy” (个体经济). It is easy for the villagers to follow the trend and cause overproduction in the same industry of business. In this context, the supply and marketing cooperatives are not only engaged in simple material transfer and supply, but also have become national institutions to provide market information, guidance, and knowledge.

4.2.5 Infrastructure

The construction of infrastructure in rural areas has continued, but vast regions still remain undeveloped and inaccessible. Road, electricity, running water, and internet access have become more common in more and more rural villages.

Modernization in China has occurred at such a rapid speed, not only because the construction costs are cheap, but also because land rent is inexpensive.⁹⁷ Similar to the period of people’s commune, the land ownership is still collective, even though the villagers have the right to use land. Notably, the rural land status (土地性质) could be designated as agricultural land or non-agricultural land for construction. Collective ownership

⁹⁷ Xin He 何新, “On Land Rent, Land Privatization, and the Three Rural Issues 关于地租, 土地私有化及三农问题,” *Three Rural Issues of China* 三农中国 Winter (2003).

allows agricultural land transfers to non-agricultural land for construction, which makes it more convenient for infrastructure development. In this case, the previous productive landscape has been supplemented with or transformed into an infrastructure landscape.

4.3 Key Findings:

Revival of Village Community and The Input of National Institution

Following development over the last half a century, the rural villages have been transformed both formally and socially. In traditional society, each village was an autonomous village community. In the first thirty years of the PRC, the village became a part of the national political and social organization. In the post-commune era, the features of these two systems sometimes coexisted in the same village.

Most of the villages continued to be based on kinship bonds and territorial bonds. Soon after the collapse of the people's commune system, many of the social traditions and ritual ceremonies were revived. Government also began to guide and assist the

development of autonomy in villages.⁹⁸ Meanwhile, the opening of financial markets opened up the village, and encouraged individual rural residents to pursue their own economic ends. Market organizations, which have been under the guidance of the national government, serve as the intermediary between national authority and the individual units. In this case, even though the village community still exists, it has been greatly individualized. The circumstances for the household units to connect and to rely on each other has decreased, just as the market has brought new urban features in the village.

These social changes are illustrated by the emergence of new functional typologies and new architectural forms, first for modernization, second to traditional vernacular architecture. Modern facilities are introduced to residences. Public space is less popular because rural society has been individualized. The individuals have less familiarity with each other. (*Figure 30*)

⁹⁸ Jianrong Yu 于建嵘, *Yuecun Politics* 岳村政治 (Beijing: Commercial Press, 2001), 320.

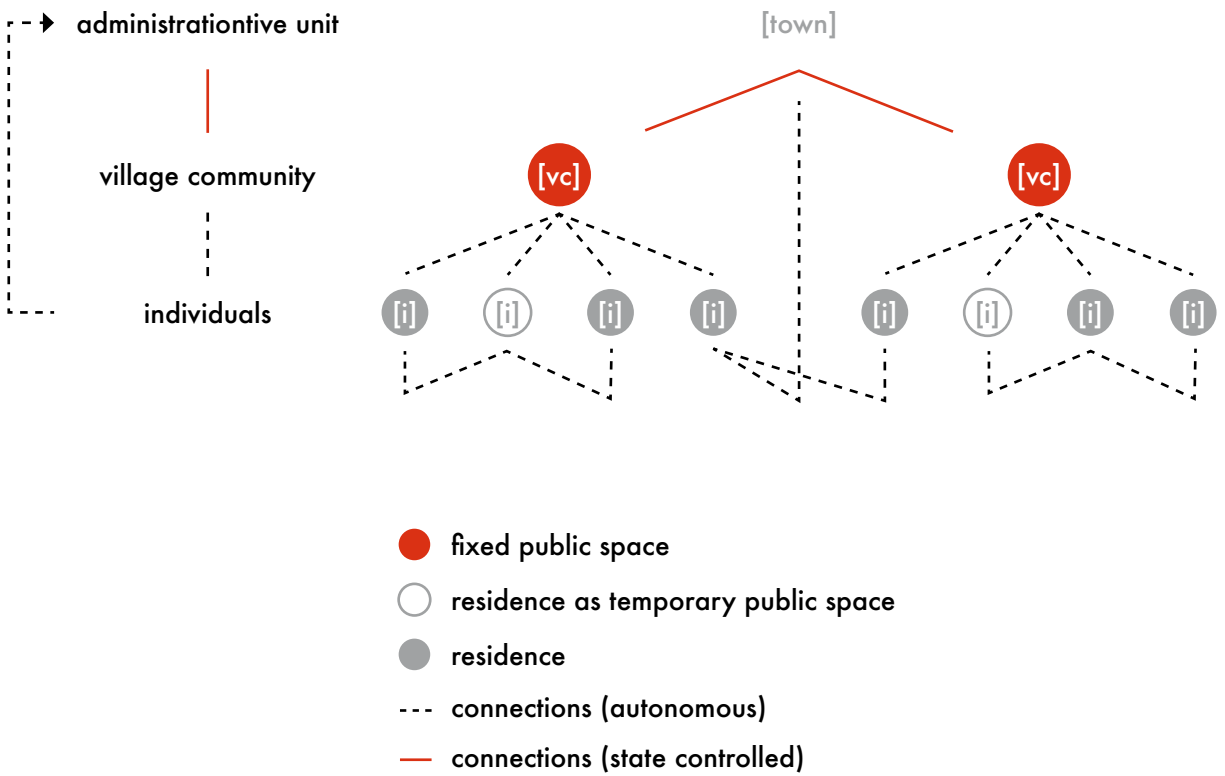


Figure 30. Social structure of "Household Individualization."

05

Case Study: Longtan Village

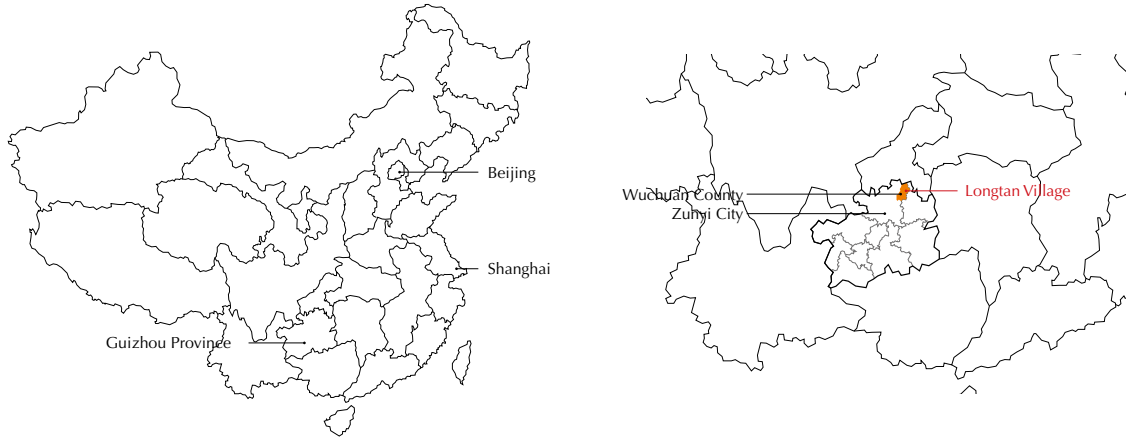


Figure 31. Location.

This thesis examines Longtan village in Wuchuan County, Zunyi City, Guizhou Province, as a case study to investigate further on vernacular architecture during the three time periods, and in response to the particular social structures of those time. It also helps to explore the research questions of this thesis. (*Figure 31*)

In 2012, Longtan was inscribed in the Traditional Chinese Village Catalog for its maintenance of traditional vernacular architecture and the culture of the Gelao minority ethnic group. The field research of this thesis has also identified the richness of modern architectural adaptations in the village. Though, the government-led tourism development has introduced new construction projects. Therefore, the complexity in both physical fabric and

social systems allows the thesis to examine multiple layers of the village, and to document not only vernacular architecture and rural space, but also the livelihoods of the local residents, which the literature review has not covered.

5.1 Background

(1) Regional Background

Guizhou Province has long been considered as a “backwater” (大后方) in China. It is the one of the few areas that was not attacked by the Japanese invasion.⁹⁹¹⁰⁰ During the invasion, small cities and towns such as Zunyi developed industry to support the mainland.¹⁰¹ Its geographical distance has led to a development gap in modern China. East coast cities attract attention from foreign markets, but the seven interior provinces¹⁰² in total only have 6.03% of the modern industrial entrepreneurs.¹⁰³

The agricultural resources are relatively poor because the hilly terrain means that only 7% of the land is arable. The major agri-

⁹⁹ Japanese Invasion or the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) was a military conflict fought primarily between China and Japan. It ended with the unconditional surrender of Japan on September 2, 1945 to the United Nations allies of WWII.

¹⁰⁰ Yi Dai and Shiming Zhang 戴逸, 张世明, *Zhongguo xi bu kai fa yu jin dai hua* 中国西部开发与近代化 [China Western Development and Modernization] (Guangdong jiaoyu chu ban she 广东教育出版社, 2006), 13.

¹⁰¹ Dai and Zhang, *Zhongguo xi bu kai fa yu jin dai hua*, 462.

¹⁰² The seven provinces include Guizhou Province, Yunnan Province, Tibet Autonomous Region, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, Qinghai Province, Gansu Province, and Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. Dai and Zhang, *Zhongguo xi bu kai fa yu jin dai hua*, 30.

¹⁰³ Dai and Zhang, *Zhongguo xi bu kai fa yu jin dai hua*, 30.

cultural products are corn and rice. Forests, on the other hand, are abundant and important to the region. Vernacular architecture of a variety of minority ethnic groups has consisted primarily of wooden structures.

According to the national Five-Year Plans, the central government has been gradually focusing on reducing the imbalance among eastern and western mainland regions. From the 11th to the 13th Five-Year Plan, the national government proposed the Western Development Project (西部大开发). Guizhou became an important figure. Since then, the cities in Guizhou Province, like other provinces and cities national wide, have been developing “beautiful rural construction action plans” to speed up the construction of the new Socialist Countryside, and to achieve development. The province has been using its diversity in minority ethnic culture to develop tourism and alleviate poverty. By 2015, the end of the 12th Five-Year, the provincial tourism-oriented development has led 24,878 people out of poverty, and the goal of the 13th is 43,559.

(2) Longtan Village

Longtan Village is located in the hilly area of northeastern Guizhou Province, southwest of Wuling Mountain Area. The

Figure 32. Longtan traditional village, and the historic cinnabar production area on its west. Google Earth map, 2014.



village is known as the origin of the Gelao ethnic group¹⁰⁴, and still maintains the Gelao vernacular architecture and culture. The village is rich in mercury resources, which has made it famous for cinnabar production. The archaeological excavations from Han Dynasty Tomb have proven that cinnabar had already appeared on Han artifacts, though the mine was closed because of heavy metal pollution in recent decades. Historically, the village relied on agricultural production and mercury mining. Traditional trading is in the form of a public market every five or seven days, and the items traded are typically agricultural products and small handicrafts.¹⁰⁵ (Figure 32)

¹⁰⁴ Gelao ethnic group mainly located in Guizhou Province. The Gelao people are considered to be indigenous to Guizhou. The main religion practiced is Taoism and Buddhist. Jiqiang Zheng, *Gelao zu yu Yelang wen hua yan jiu* 仡佬族与夜郎文化研究 (Guiyang: Guizhou min zu chu ban she, 2007).

¹⁰⁵ Dai and Zhang, *Zhongguo xi bu kai fa yu jin dai hua*, 469.

Owing to its rich Gelao traditional cultural and vernacular architecture, the village was recognized as a Famous Historical and Cultural Village in 2010, and was inscribed in the Traditional Chinese Village Catalog in 2012. It is the only Gelao village in the Catalog. Recognizing the richness of this cultural heritage, the provincial, city, and county governments have started to develop cultural tourism in the village.

In 2011, the village was incorporated in the Regional Development and Poverty Alleviation Planning in Wuling Mountain Area¹⁰⁶. The plan intended to create a tourism route within the region. (*Figure 33*) The Protection and Construction Planning of Rural Tourism Characteristic Villages in Wuchuan Autonomous County was launched during the Southwest Minority Traditional Village Heritage Tourism Forum. The tourism development of Longtan has been the key project in the plan. The major concept has been “Village and Town construction based on tourism; transportation infrastructure based on tourism; Propaganda based on tourism; Economic development based on tourism.”

With the goal of regional tourism-oriented development, major

¹⁰⁶ Regional Development and Poverty Alleviation Planning in Wuling Mountain Area (2011-2020) 武陵山片区区域发展与扶贫攻坚规划 (2011-2020 年), National Development and Reform Commission and State Council Leading Group Office for Poverty Alleviation and Development, 2011.



Figure 33. Drone imagery of Longtan village from summer, 2016, shows new constructions of tourism facilities and the existing village fabric.

- Wuling Mountain Area
- Tourism route
- Sites on the tourism route
- Province boundaries
- Wuchuan County

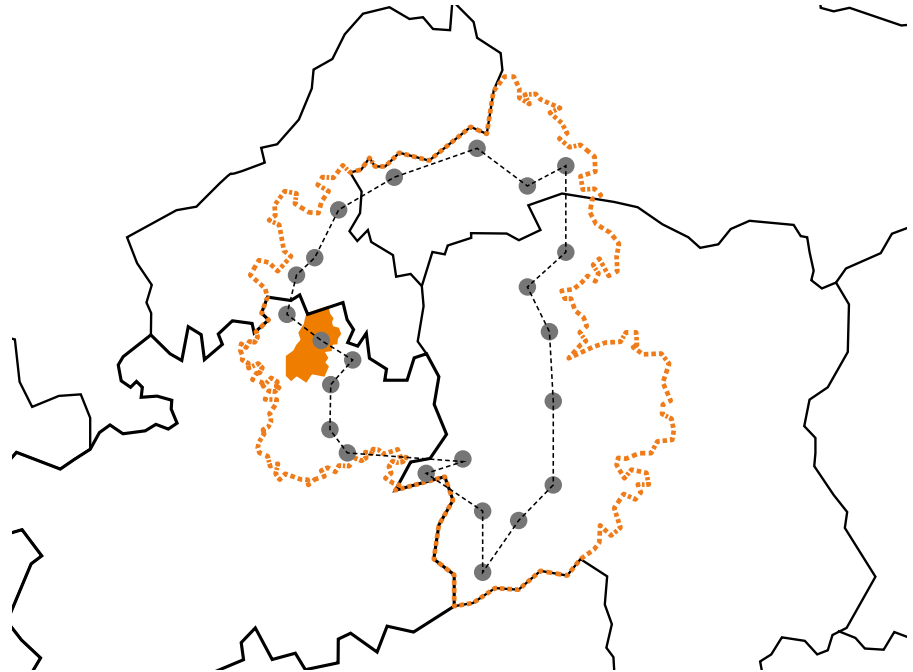


Figure 34. Longtan village of Wuchuan County is included in the tourism route of Regional Development and Poverty Alleviation Planning in Wuling Mountain Area, 2011

construction in the village began in 2014. Preservation of the traditional vernacular architecture and culture has brought great opportunities for the development of cultural tourism. (Figure 34)

5.2 Architectural and Spatial Transformation

5.2.1 Residence

The village has 96 residences currently. The thesis identifies four types of housing, through documentation, measuring and interviewing the local residents. These are traditional vernacular buildings approximately a hundred years in age; modern vernacular architecture of the past decade; kit houses ordered from

other regions; and brick houses in the buffer zone. The hybrid status of different forms of houses in the village illustrates how government-driven forces and market intervention affect the traditional village community.

(1) Traditional vernacular architecture

There are 39 traditional vernacular dwellings in the village, and three of them are recognized as county-level heritage sites. *(Figure 35)* As it is shown on the map, the traditional vernacular dwellings are mostly on the east of the village, close to the rice paddies. *(Figure 36)*

The traditional wood residence has three jians. The jian in the middle, also known as zhengtang, is used for worship “heaven, earth, sovereign, parent, and teacher” (天地君亲师, *tian di jun qin shi*), which is a local religious practice of Taoism. *(Figure 37)* It is also used for wedding, funeral and festival ceremonies. One of the jians on the side serves as the living space. The space is divided into two areas: a bedroom with a wood partition wall, and *huopu* (火铺), which is a small wooden platform lifted up from the floor. *(Figure 38)* *Huopu* is an interior fireplace used for boiling food and making tea. It also functions to heat and light the space, and also expels parasites. Family members gather



Figure 35. A traditional vernacular residence in Longtan village.



Figure 36. 39 traditional vernacular dwellings in Longtan village.

Figure 37. An interior scene of zhengtang, the jian in the middle of a traditional vernacular dwelling in Longtan. The red paper on the wall writes, "heaven, earth, sovereign, parent, and teacher", as a symbol of Taoism religion practice.



Figure 38. Huopu.





Figure 39. Layout of a traditional vernacular residence.

around *huopu* chatting or even sleeping around it at night. It is an important space in Longtan village and the Wuling Mountain Areas. However, starting in 1999, the *huopu* have gradually been replaced by electricity. Local residents have dismantled their *huopu* and use the space for storage. The other *jian* is also divided by a wood partition wall to separate bedroom and storage. Some households put up wood boards between the *jianjias*, to create a second floor for storage and airing/drying



Figure 40. Components of the traditional vernacular architecture in Longtan village, including earthen foundation, wooden structure, and tile roof.

foods. Some of the houses have additions attached to the original structures. The original house and additions form a linear plan, or a three-section compound (三合院, *san he yuan*). The traditional vernacular dwelling also has a small courtyard in front of it, and a small garden around the building to grow vegetables for the family. (Figure 39)

The construction is based on traditional building techniques. This

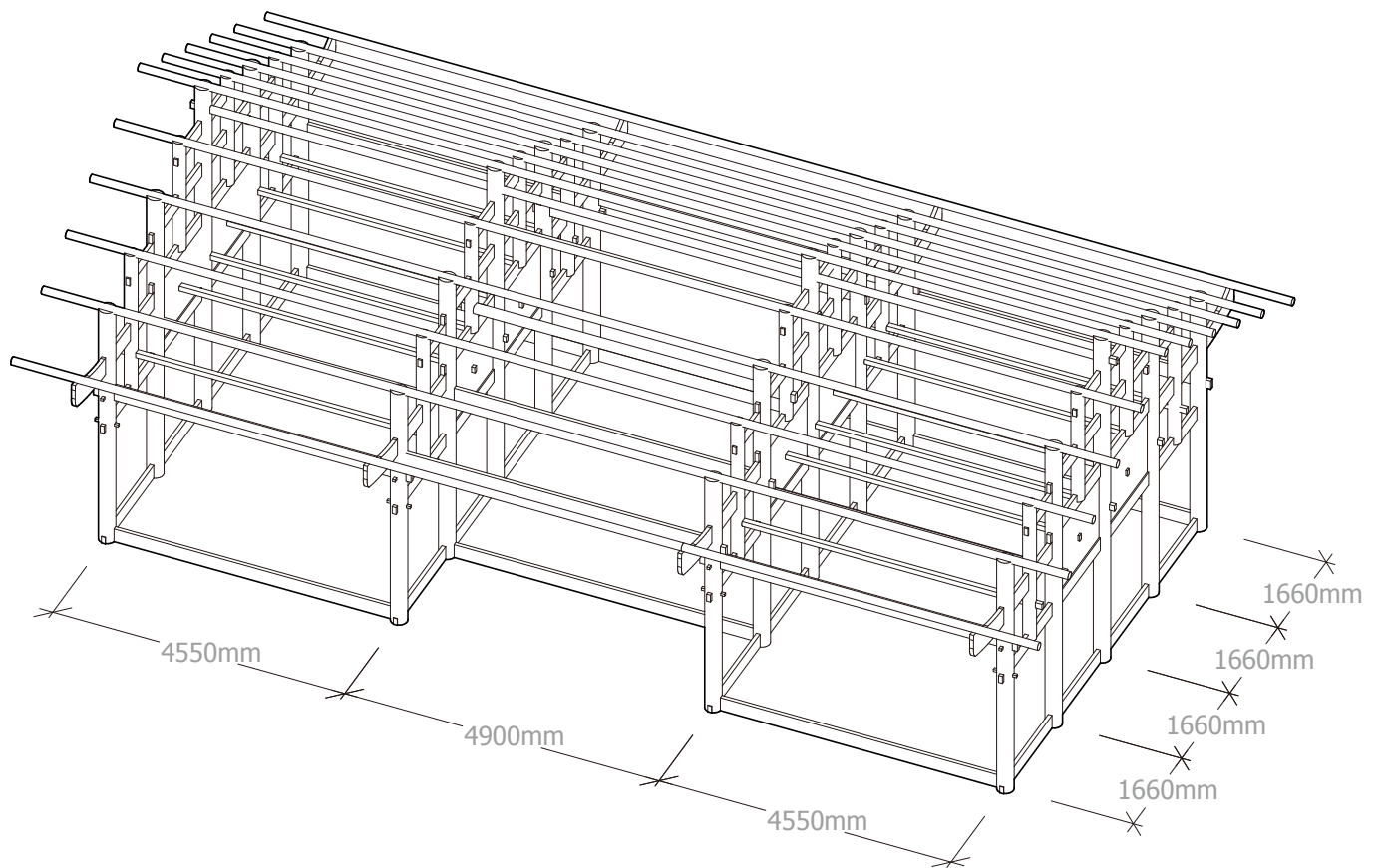


Figure 41. Structural system of a typical traditional vernacular architecture in Longtan village.

kind of dwelling usually has an earthen foundation, chuandou wooden structure, tile roof, and slate as interior pavement. (Figure 40) The household owner invites a moshi and asks relatives and friend for assistance. He pays the moshi a certain amount of money and holds a feast for the assistants in return. (Figure 41)

(2) Modern vernacular architecture

There are 35 modern vernacular dwellings in the village. (Figure 42) They are located on the outskirts of the village, especially to

Figure 42. A modern vernacular dwelling with second floor functioned as hotel rooms.



- Modern vernacular residences
- Other residences in Longtan
- Other buildings
- Water
- Farm land
- Flower bed

Figure 43. 35 modern vernacular dwellings. Most of them are located on the outskirts of the village, especially on the southwest, along the main road that leads to the town before 2014.



Figure 44. A modern vernacular dwelling that has rubble concrete foundation, wooden structure, traditional clay tile roofs, and industrial-manufactured window decorations.



the southwest, which leads to the road to the town. (*Figure 43*)

This kind of housing evolves from the traditional vernacular architecture, but now has a second floor that is added for bedrooms. These extra bedrooms are for children who work in the cities and only visit home during Spring Festival. The residents plan to use the rooms for hostels. Therefore, the second floor is higher than the ones of the traditional vernacular dwellings. The new houses have rubble concrete foundations, wooden structures, traditional clay tile roofs, and industrial manufactured stone slabs as interior pavements. (*Figure 44*) The wood is mostly recycled from old houses or imported from Huangdu Town, a town in Wuchuan County, a two-hour drive from Longtan. (*Figure*

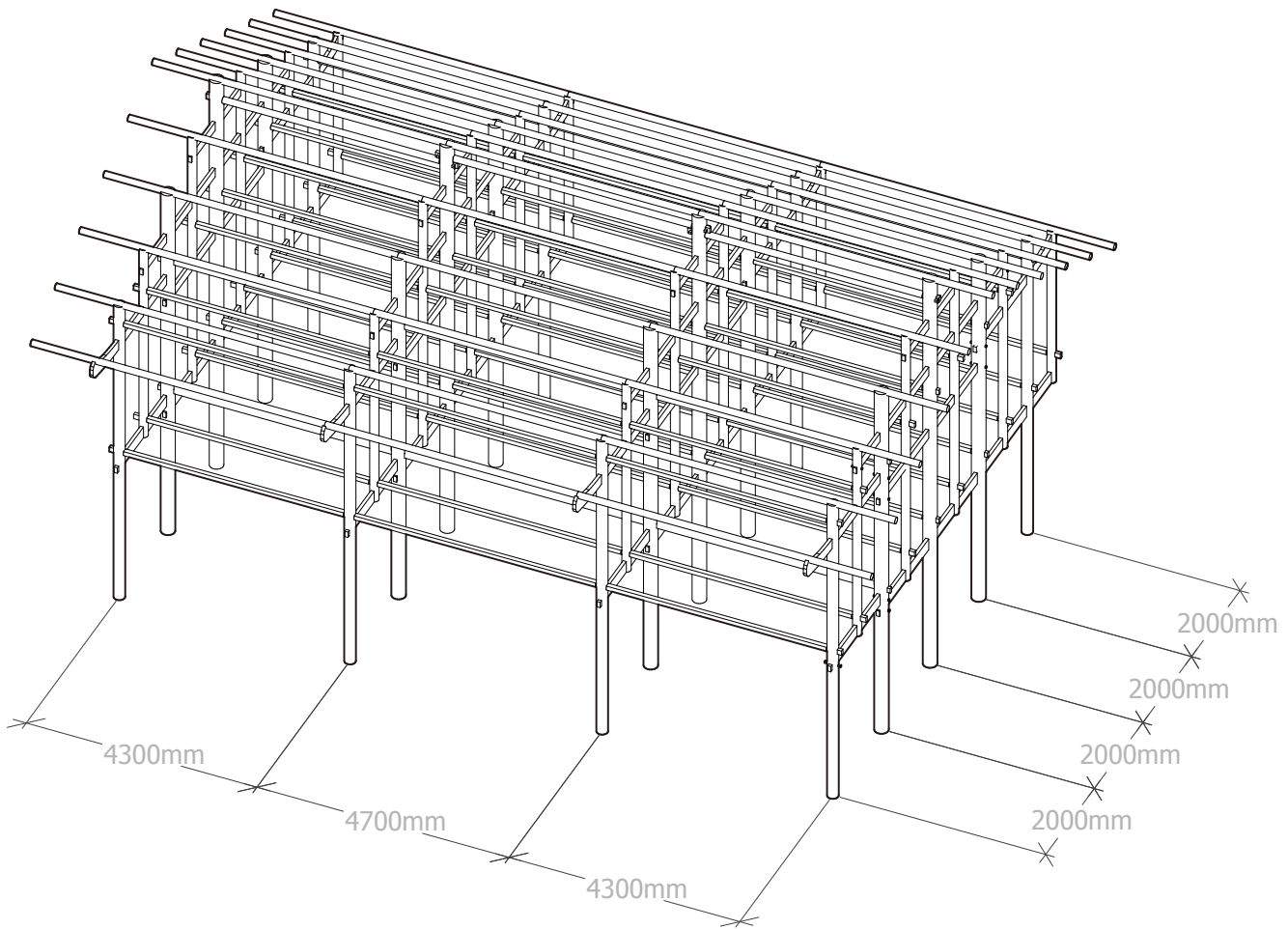


Figure 45. Structural system of a typical modern vernacular architecture in Longtan village.

45) Some of the wood joints are simplified and use metal nails to join components. The modern joints have a similar scale and proportion as the traditional ones, though they use metric units instead of traditional formulas. The builders use both traditional tools and small electric tools.

The household owner still invites a moshi, although now he invites professional craftsmen rather than relatives and friends in the village to help erect the house. The moshi is paid after the

wooden frame structure is erected as in the past, whereas the craftsmen are paid per diem. A modern vernacular residence is about 200 square millimeters. The wooden frame structure usually costs 70,000 RMB (approximately 10,000 USD) in total. The roof tiles are 15,000 RMB. The building envelope costs 200,000 RMB. The comprehensive cost is approximately 300,000 RMB or 1,000-1,200 RMB/m².

The data suggests that the building envelope costs the most money. Therefore, to save money, some households use bricks as envelope material, and cover the façade with cheap composite board with wood color. This contradicts the traditional style of construction. Historically, the minority groups in Wuling Mountain Area, including Gelao, Miao and Tujia, used wood or bamboo splits as building envelope material. Only some rich households used bricks or earthen materials to enhance safety. Another phenomenon currently in Longtan is that some new houses have the first floors in brick and the second floors in wood. Some households even place the vernacular wood house on the top of a brick house. This is because even though the brick is more affordable and fireproof than the wood, it has higher water absorption, making it uncomfortable to inhabit such a house in the humid climate in southern China.



Figure 46. One *jia* without building envelope for storage.



Figure 47. A household dismantled one *jia* and is reconstructing.

During field research, some cases illustrate the flexibility of the vernacular wooden structure. Some houses have a building envelope over only one or two *jians*. This is usually because the owners could not afford the expensive building materials. They leave some *jians* for open air storage or airing grains, and install the envelope when it is needed. (Figure 46) In other cases, the household dismantle one frame of *jianjia* and reconstruct it. (Figure 47)

(3) Kit house

Other than the traditional and modern vernacular residences, the research identified one kit house under construction in Longtan village that is not in a vernacular style. (*Figure 48*) It is on the northeast of the village. (*Figure 49*)

As the household owner explained, he ordered the house from Kaili city¹⁰⁷. The population in Kaili is mainly Miao and Dong Minorities. Even though the house is made of wood and similar to the indigenous three-section compound in Longtan village, it is still recognizable as being from another area. The kit house has more ornamental details on the columns of the second floor. It also has a floor slab close to the roof for storage, whereas the vernacular residences in Longtan do not. (*Figure 50*)

The household owner has been working in Kaili for years. He inherited the lot in Longtan from his father who passed away recently, and chose to reconstruct the house because the old one was quite dilapidated. He decided to order a prefabricated house directly from Kaili because he does not have close connections to other residents in Longtan village. The construction company is responsible for sending workers on site and assembling the

¹⁰⁷ Kaili city, a county-level city under the administration of Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Autonomous Prefecture, southeastern Guizhou Province.



Figure 48. A kit house originated from Kaili city, west Guizhou Province.

- Kit house
- Other residences in Longtan
- Other buildings
- Water
- Farm land
- Flower bed



Figure 49. The kit house is under construction on the northeast corner of Longtan village.



Figure 50. Difference between a modern vernacular dwelling and the kit house

components for the client. He thinks it is much easier to order a wood kit house than to prepare wood materials and to contact carpenters by himself, especially without knowing the local market or having acquaintances in the village.

As is evident from the interviews with other residents, some people in their thirties are interested in ordering kit houses. One of them is a teacher in the middle school of Daping Town (ten-minute drive from Longtan village). He is thirty-two years old and his new house is under construction.

I personally prefer brick houses, because they provide better living conditions and are cheap and fast to build. But since my homestead (宅基地) is close to the main street leading to the village entrance, I have to build a wood house. I planned to order a house in Kaili, or some window frames at least. I travelled to Kaili before, and I like its vernacular architectural style, which is very delicate. The buildings in Longtan are too huge and cumbersome. It costs about the same money as building a vernacular house in Longtan. But it is too inconvenient because I do not have friends there.

(4) Brick house

Among the 96 houses in Longtan village, 20 of them use bricks for the building envelope material in the main houses. Six houses use bricks for additions. It is unclear when bricks were first used as building envelope materials in the village. (Figure 51) (Figure 52) Eleven of the 26 buildings cover the brick walls with wood grain façade, because they are adjacent to the alleys in the village or face a street outside the village. (Figure 53) (Figure 54) As per preservation regulation, the brick houses that already exist and are close to the alley or street should be covered with wood grain materials to maintain the integrity of the vernacular architectural environment; new construction should only adopt wood.

Another kind of masonry house is commonly seen in the building groups adjacent to Longtan village. (Figure 55) The housing style is designed by the local government planning and design department. The new houses use concrete blocks and are painted dark brown to mimic the wood color. (Figure 56) The household owners indicate that the masonry houses are cheap in cost of construction, about 700-800 RMB/m² without interior finish, which is only two thirds of the total cost of the modern vernacular house. And the construction does not require expertise in



Figure 51. A brick house in Longtan village.



Figure 52. Brick houses are scattered in the village.



Figure 53. Some of the households followed preservation regulations and covered the brick walls with wood.



Figure 54. Brick buildings covered with wood.

- Masonry buildings in other villages
- Buildings in Longtan
- Other buildings
- Water
- Farm land

Figure 55. A group of masonry buildings is adjacent to Longtan village along the road to Daping Town.

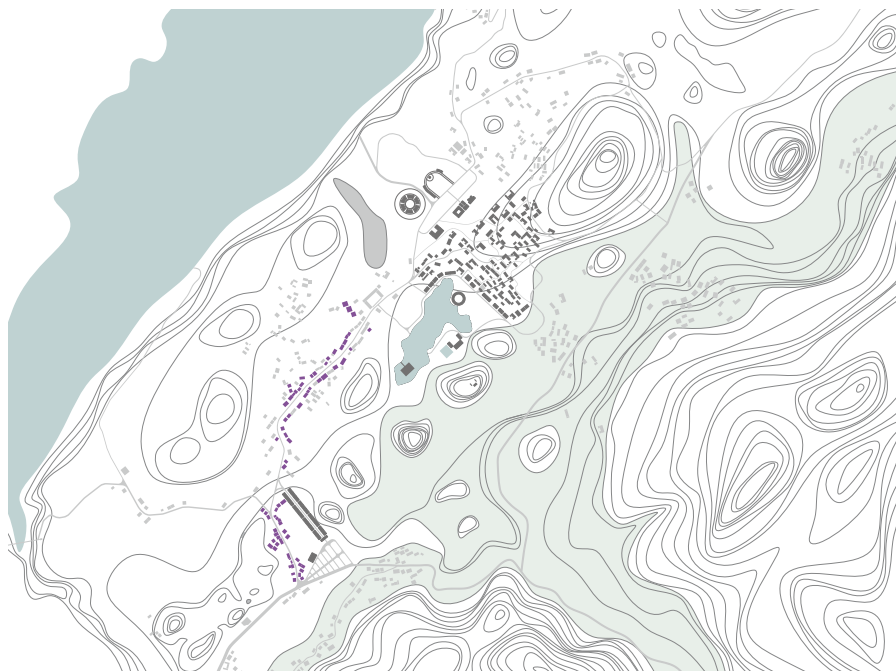


Figure 56. Masonry buildings near Longtan village.

building. According to residents living in masonry houses, they save the step of inviting a *moshi* and carpenters. Instead, they can build the house by themselves. In many of the cases, the residents do not have interior finishes in order to reduce the budget further. The living conditions, therefore, are unsatisfactory due to poor insulation and water absorption. Despite these drawbacks, many residents prefer to construct this kind of masonry house for its initial financial benefit, and they like the fantasy of living in a “modern” house.

The adaptation of vernacular architecture in Longtan village is the result of both “top-down” preservation protection and the “bottom up” preference of local residents. According to the Longtan Famous Historic and Cultural Village Preservation Plan, the traditional vernacular architecture of the Gelao minority in the core zone which includes the stone-pavement alley, trees, the farm lands around the village, the natural landscape of the mountains, the traditional folk art and the living style of the Gelao, should be preserved.¹⁰⁸ The houses that have already used bricks need to be covered with wood or materials with wood grain. The new construction or re-construction should use wood houses. The local government does not give the residents finan-

¹⁰⁸ Guizhou Province Urban and Rural Planning and Design Institute 贵州省城乡规划设计研究院, Wuchuan Gelao and Miao Autonomous Minority County Longtan Village Preservation Plan 2016-2030 务川仡佬族苗族自治县龙潭村保护规划 (2016-2030 年), 2015.

cial assistance. Meanwhile, the local residents are not against building wood houses. Some of the residents imagine their ideal housing prototype as the following:

"I would love to live in a wood house. It is comfortable to live in: the material of wood keeps the interior dry and warm in the winter, and cool in the summer. But it is not fire-proof. The ideal house is a concrete structure on the first floor and wood structure on and above the second floor. The first floor functions as a kitchen, bathroom and living room. The second floor is used for bedrooms. "says Shen.

From the analysis of the four housing prototypes, this thesis recognizes the determinants of the residents' preference are cost, functional use, and durability. These aspects have been making members of the village community more individualized without assistance and connection during construction.

"When a man throws away a tool to acquire a new one, he does so because he believes that the new tool suits his purpose better. Therefore, in any process of change, there is an integration of his past experience, his understanding of the present situation and his expectation of the future consequences."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Xiaotong Fei, introduction to *Peasant Life in China: a Field Study of Country Life in the Yangtze Valley* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1980), 2-3.

What Fei Xiaotong wrote in the Peasant Life of China is helpful in understanding the adaptations in the residences of Longtan. The modern vernacular architecture is the adaptation of moshi, based on the requirements of the local residents. The logic and process of the construction activity has not changed much. Even though the owners are likely to invite carpenters with expertise instead of their acquaintances for help, the carpenters are usually the residents in the village. The construction activity still maintains the six steps of building traditional vernacular that have been described in section 2.3. On the other hand, the construction process of kit house and the masonry house suggest the disintegration of the village community. The migration of the labor force results in alienation between local residents within the community. The construction method of the masonry house makes each individual household more isolated from others. The previous social connection resulting from the social tradition of construction has vanished.

5.2.2 Public Space and Events

The public space and social events still maintain the character of the village community, and can be observed in Longtan village. However, after Longtan Village was recognized as a Famous His-

torical and Cultural Village in 2010 and inscribed in Traditional Chinese Village Catalog in 2012, new public space has emerged for tourism development.

(1) Original Public Space and events

The major public spaces in the village can be categorized as either spiritual or non-spiritual spaces. The spiritual public space includes *Baowang* Temple (宝王府, *baowang fu*), which is on the hill to the southwest to the village. Baowang is the respectful address for the Buddha. The worship of *Baowang* (拜宝王) has been the tradition of the Gelao Minority since the Ming Dynasty¹¹⁰, when Buddhism became the dominant belief in Guizhou Province. The exact year of the temple in Longtan is unknown. Nowadays, the residents still go to the temple and worship Baowang during Chinese Lunar New Year or special dates. (Figure 57)

The non-spiritual space includes the courtyards of individual households and the small alleys within the village. No open space or village plaza for public activities developed as the village gradually formed. Therefore, most of the everyday communications take place around the dwellings, or when the residents

¹¹⁰ Ming dynasty (1368-1644). During the time, Han and Miao migrated to Guizhou Province and brought the Buddhism to the region. Zheng, *Gelao zu yu Yelang wen hua yan jiu*, 34.



Figure 57. Baowang temple.

see each other on the street.

Social events are extremely rich because of the cultural tradition of the Gelao Minority. The traditional Nuo opera (雉 戏)¹¹¹ and Festive lantern ceremony (花灯 仪式) are still popular in the Gelao Minority villages. (Figure 58) These ceremonies are the folk art and the intangible cultural heritage of the village. They have functioned as the social connections that enhance the village community. During the field investigation, this thesis finds that the Festive lantern ceremony still exists as a vital event in Longtan village. As the residents describe it, the festive lantern ceremony is held to wish good luck. It was also a ceremony to

¹¹¹ Nuo Opera (雉 戏 , Nuo Xi) is a kind of folk opera popular in Guizhou Province. It is characterized by dress, performance, and ferocious masks. Puguang Gu et al., *Nuo xi mian ju yi shu* 雉戏面具艺术 (Taipei Shi: Shu xin chu ban she, 1990), 3.

Figure 58. Festive Lantern Ceremony of Gelao ethnic group. The ceremony was taken place in a chosen household. *Photo: Ou Shuang, 2015.*



pray for birth and health in the ancient time, though because of birth control policy and the prevalence of modern medical facilities, these two aspects have stopped. But for the Chinese Lunar New Year, residents still get together to prepare and hold the ceremony for good luck. Residents with experience in making lanterns get together, usually in December, to make the 12 lanterns and other stage props. (Figure 59) The residents also decide which specific household will hold the ceremony. At the time of ceremony, the local residents are invited to the household and have a feast together with the five men who perform and direct the ceremony. After the feast, the performers sing folk tunes and dance in the house. They also interact with the residents in the house. Then the performers direct the ceremony to

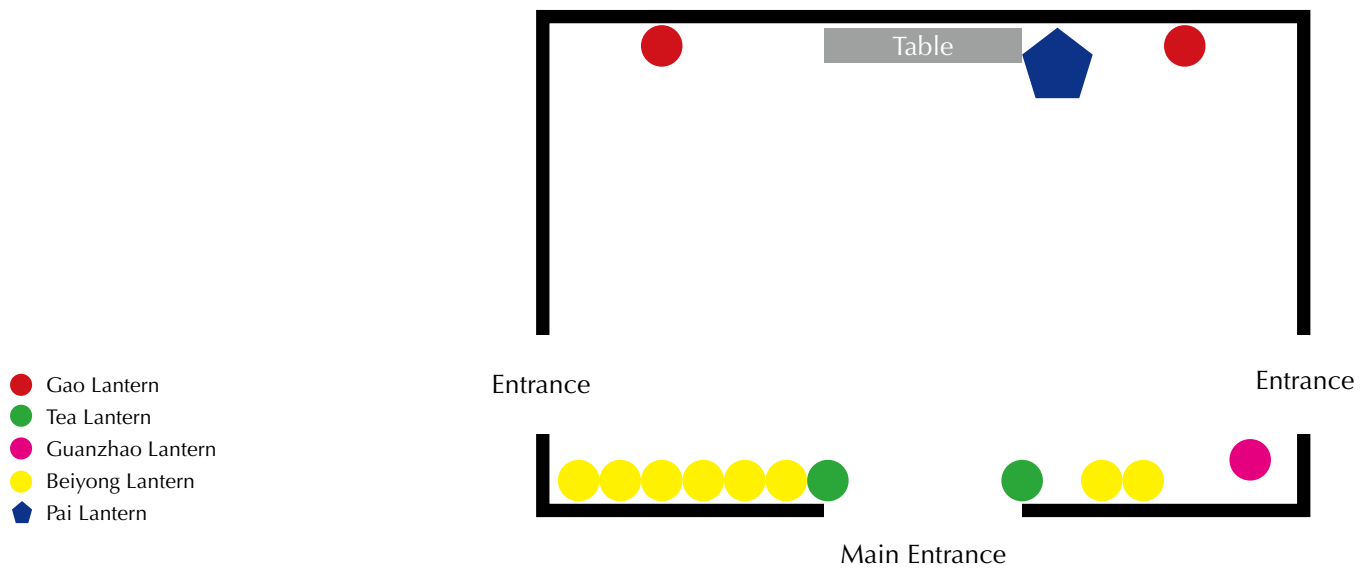


Figure 59. The 12 lanterns have their own places in *zhengtang* during the ceremony. Source: *Ou Shuang*.

the alleys, walk through the village house by house, and finally end up returning to the main household. After the ceremony, the household provides the people a night snack and recreational activities. After the Spring Festival, an auspicious day is chosen to burn all the lanterns.

The ceremonies such as the Festive lantern ceremony are usually hold once a year. Another ceremony that takes place more often in the village is during the construction activities, as described in 5.2.1. Even though the residences that are newly built are not the traditional vernacular architecture, but the ceremonial procedure is still much the same in the construction of modern vernacular architecture.

The inheritance of the traditional public space and social events suggests that Longtan village still retains the social structural features of village community. The traditional space and events connect the residents in certain circumstances.

(2) New public space (from 2010)

As the village has been recognized as a Traditional Chinese Village, and a Famous Historical and Cultural Village, the provincial and local government has been improving the village environment and the living conditions of the local residents. The new public space is tourism-oriented, and can be differentiated from the space for local residents. Tourist spaces will be discussed in section 5.2.6.

The Gelao ancestral hall was built in recent years and was renovated in 2016. It consists of the Shenyong ancestral temple and a pavilion with stone tablets. The building group is in the west of the village residential area. Shenyong (申 佑, 1425-1449) was born in Longtan village, and was the *Sichuan Daoyushi* (四川道御史) in the Ming Dynasty. When Emperor Yingzong of Ming launched the battle with the Mongols, Shenyong saved the emperor's life and died in the Tumu Crisis¹¹². He was praised by

¹¹² Tumu crisis (1449), was a conflict between the Mongols and the Ming Dynasty which led to the capture of the Zhengtong Emperor. Cathal J. Nolan, *The Age of Wars of Religion, 1000-1650*, Volume 1: An Encyclopedia of Global Warfare and Civilization (Greenwood Press, 2006),

the Emperor Dayzong of Ming (the son of Yingzong) as a martyr. The emperor also built the Shenyong ancestral temple, which is now situated within Wuchuan County. The local government views Shenyong not only as a Gelao hero, but also as a part of the village's history, which serves as a resource for cultural tourism. Therefore, the government decided to construct a new Shenyong ancestral temple in Longtan village. *(Figure 60) (Figure 61)* The construction of the Gelao ancestral hall is meant to establish the spiritual center of the village community.

The government also renovated an abandoned house in the village as a small plaza for the local residents. *(Figure 62)* The house is of traditional vernacular architecture with only one jian. It used to be the dwelling of an old widower. After the old man moved to the city to live with his children, the house was left unoccupied. In 2016, before the Zunyi Tourism Conference, the house was levied by the local government for collective use. The wood envelope was removed, and the structure was left as a pavilion. The small courtyard in front of the house was paved with stone slabs, which makes the condition better for the public use. *(Figure 63)*



Figure 60. Photos of Shenyong ancestral temple and the plaza.



Figure 61. Shenyong ancestral temple is in the middle of the ancestral halls, and facing Shenyong Plaza.

- Village plaza
- Residences in Longtan
- Other buildings
- Water
- Farm land
- Flower bed



Figure 62. Village plaza.



Figure 63. Before and after renovation of the new village plaza.

Shortly after the plaza was completed in August, 2016, this researcher paid a return visit to Longtan in December, 2016. According to the residents, they hardly use the small village plaza. Even though they praise the design, they prefer to use the courtyards of their acquaintances. They claimed they would not use a space with which they are not familiar. One of the residents mentions that he played music in his courtyard every night at 7:00. Other residents come to dance together. They even formed

a folk dance troupe and are composing dances themselves.

5.2.3 Commercial Space

This section examines spaces of commercial consumption for the local residents in Longtan village. The consumption space for tourists will be discussed in section 5.2.6.

As it was analyzed in the previous chapters, commercial consumption space has the features of public space. It has been an important social connection between local residents, and a link between a village and the outside world. The major rural space of commercial consumption in different time periods include: the weekend market in the traditional village community; the supply and marketing cooperatives in people's commune; and the small shops and recovered weekend market of recent decades.

It is unclear if Longtan had its own weekend market historically. According to the local residents, the cooperative buildings were demolished after the era of the people's commune. Nowadays, the residents in Longtan and the other villages around it go to the weekend market in Daping town. It takes about an hour on foot. Daping is a linear town, where all the buildings are along



Figure 64. Small shops gather around bus station. The bus runs every half an hour.

one single road. On Saturdays, the booths are set along the main road, and hardly any automobiles can pass. The varieties of commodities include food, fowl, and all kinds of daily necessities.

Accessibility to Daping Town and Wuchuan County has become more convenient in recent decades. The local residents commute to the town and county by bus, motorcycle, or private car. Commodities can be transferred to the village and exchanged more easily and more often amongst local residents. Therefore, the residents do not necessarily rely on the weekend market. Small shops are clustered in the building group to the southwest of Longtan village, close to the bus station. (Figure 64) While waiting for the bus, which comes every hour from 6:00 to 17:00,



Figure 65. Farm land and mercury mining relic.

the residents, especially school students, often wait together inside the shops and buy snacks. The buildings in this group are all two-story masonry houses. The shop owners use the first floor as shops, and the second floor as living space.

5.2.4 Production space and working space

According to Wuchuan County Annals, the residents in Longtan village have been subsisting on agricultural production and mercury mining as far back as the Han Dynasty. (Figure 65)

The predominance of mercury mining has been key to the cultural identity of the Gelao minority nationality. In 1984,



Figure 66. The original farm land has been transforming into flower bed due to development of tourism.

when Guizhou Ethnic Affairs Commission worked on the reinstatement of the ethnic nationality, the first qualification was if the resident's ancestor was working in the cinnabar and mercury industry, and whether they still preserved the production tools.¹¹³ However, the mercury mine has been closed because of pollution in recent years. The cinnabar processing site is in the west of Longtan village and close to the Shenyong Cultural Plaza. The site has been spotlighted as a tourism site in the preservation plan.

The farmlands of Longtan are to the east of the residential area in the valley. They have been are to be transformed into flower beds as a backdrop for wedding photography. The new species include

¹¹³ Wuchuan Gelao and Miao Autonomous County Bureau of Ethnic Affairs 务川仡佬族苗族自治县民族事务局, *Wuchuan Gelao Ethnic Group* 务川仡佬族 (Guizhou Province: Guizhou min zu chu ban she 贵州民族出版社, 2006), 13-14.

- Brick houses
- Other residences in Longtan
- Other buildings
- Water
- Farm land
- Flower bed



Figure 67. New restaurants and hotels in the village are mostly on the west side of the village, where it is closer to existing tourism facilities.

lily, tulip, and other eight exotic breeds.¹¹⁴ (Figure 66) Without the farmland for cultivation, Longtan village is experiencing the transition from an agricultural village to a tourism-industry village. The residents are actively adapting their residences to country house hotels and restaurants. (Figure 67) Most of the visitors are from Wuchuan County, and most of them take a one-day visit and drive back to the county after dinner. Therefore, whether the boom in country house hotels and restaurants has a rational basis needs to be reconsidered. As a matter of fact, some of the hotels and restaurants owners have gradually realized this. The owner of the first country house hotel and restaurant said:

¹¹⁴ "Wuchuan County Gelao Origin Scenic Region Lily Flower Wedding Photography Base Project," Wuchuan County Government, accessed May 1, 2017. http://www.gzwuchuan.gov.cn/wsfw/ztfw/tzfw/tzdt/201605/t20160524_441238.html.

“When I first opened my business, almost all of the visitors would come to my restaurant. I did make a profit. But in the recent two years, the restaurants and hotels have been everywhere in Longtan. Business has been much harder. In addition, there is a new restaurant group at the main entrance next to the bus station and parking lot. The restaurant environment is generally better than our residence on average. I’m afraid that there would be fewer and fewer tourists stopping by my place.”

5.2.5 Infrastructure

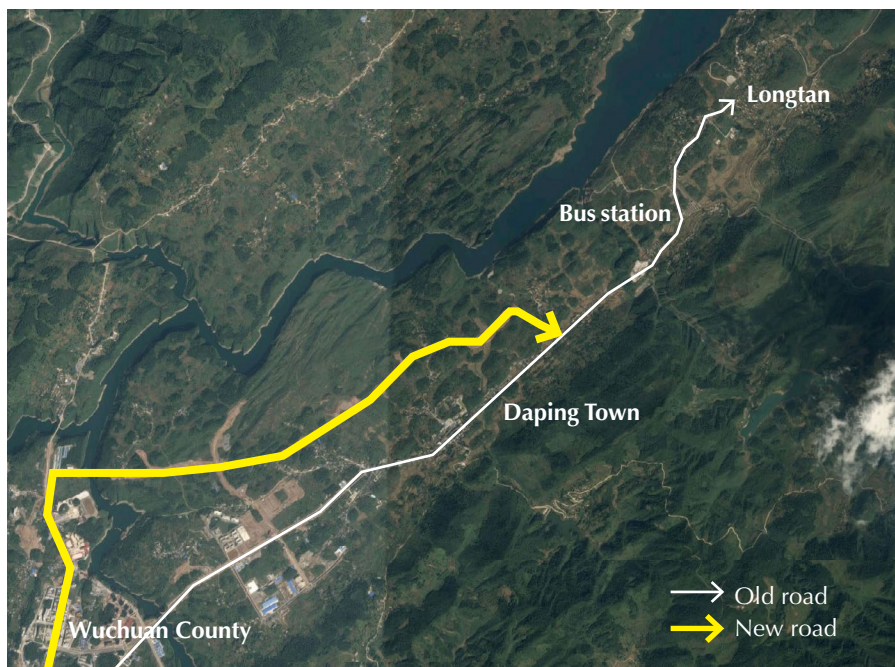
The infrastructure in Longtan village was gradually built from the 1980s to the late 2000s, until the great governmental input in village development.

Electricity was introduced to the village in 1987. It was updated in 2008 and 2012, in order to successfully hold the folk art performance for tourism once a year. The performance is to be held in the Shenyou cultural plaza. The improved electricity system also allows most of the households to have high-power electrical appliances, such as televisions, washing machines, and refrigerators. The hotels and restaurants have been able to install air

Figure 68. Local residents installed air conditioners on the facade of their houses.



Figure 69. The new road to Longtan is under construction. It is parallel to the current road which pass through Daping Town.



conditioners in each bedroom and dining room. Though in many of the cases, the ventilators are installed directly on the exterior wooden walls. (*Figure 68*)

The only road from Wuchuan County to Longtan village passes through Daping Town. It is a thirty-minute drive without traffic congestion. The road in the linear town is two-lane, which makes it easy to cause traffic jams. In 2014, the county government began to build a multilane expressway that will officially open in 2017. The expressway is parallel to the town. This will save 15 minutes driving, and will make the connection between the village community and the outside world more convenient. (*Figure 69*)

5.2.6 Tourism facilities

The emerging tourism facilities are mainly funded by the county government. The facilities could be categorized by commercial space, non-profit recreational space, or basic facilities.

(1) Commercial space

The tourism-oriented commercial spaces mainly include restaurants, hotels, bars, and souvenir shops. As was analyzed in the



Figure 70. Lotus Villa, the earliest hotel and restaurant in Longtan.

previous section, most of the restaurants and hotels are operated by the local residents. They use the first floor as restaurants and the second floor as the hotel rooms. The architectural documentation illustrates that the buildings of this typology are mostly on the boundary of the village, and are grouped together. One exception is the Lotus Villa. It is 200m away southeast of the village gate. (*Figure 70*) The villa is the very first restaurant and hotel in the region. It is funded by an individual in the county and supported by the local government. The swimming pool is also the first open-air swimming pool in the county area, which has been attracting huge amounts of tourists in the summer. Because the accommodation conditions at Lotus Villa are much better than the hotel bedrooms in the village, and many visitors



Figure 71. The restaurants, bars and souvenir shops are inserted near the village gate, in front of Jiutian waterside pavilion.

are living close to the village, this facility has not helped much in enhancing the business of the village hotels.

The restaurants, bars and souvenir shops are located near the village gate, in front of Jiutian waterside pavilion. (Figure 71)

They are founded and funded by the county government, which exists to attract foreign business and rent. They are designed by architects and built by a construction team local to the county. To respond to the traditional vernacular architecture and the



Figure 72. New wooden structure built by construction team.

integrity of the village environment, the designers used wooden structure houses, though the houses are prefabricated and have a lot of novelties. Another group of government-financed restaurants is next to the Shenyou cultural plaza. The two-story wood buildings are concentric to a circular small plaza. The pattern is in response to Jiutian waterside pavilion. This thesis considers the new building form and compares it with the two kinds of vernacular wood houses, in order to understand the logic of construction and the potential influence on social structure.

The building has three jians, and two floors. (*Figure 72*) It has about the same area as the modern vernacular architecture in the village (see 5.2.1). The business owner can rent jians based

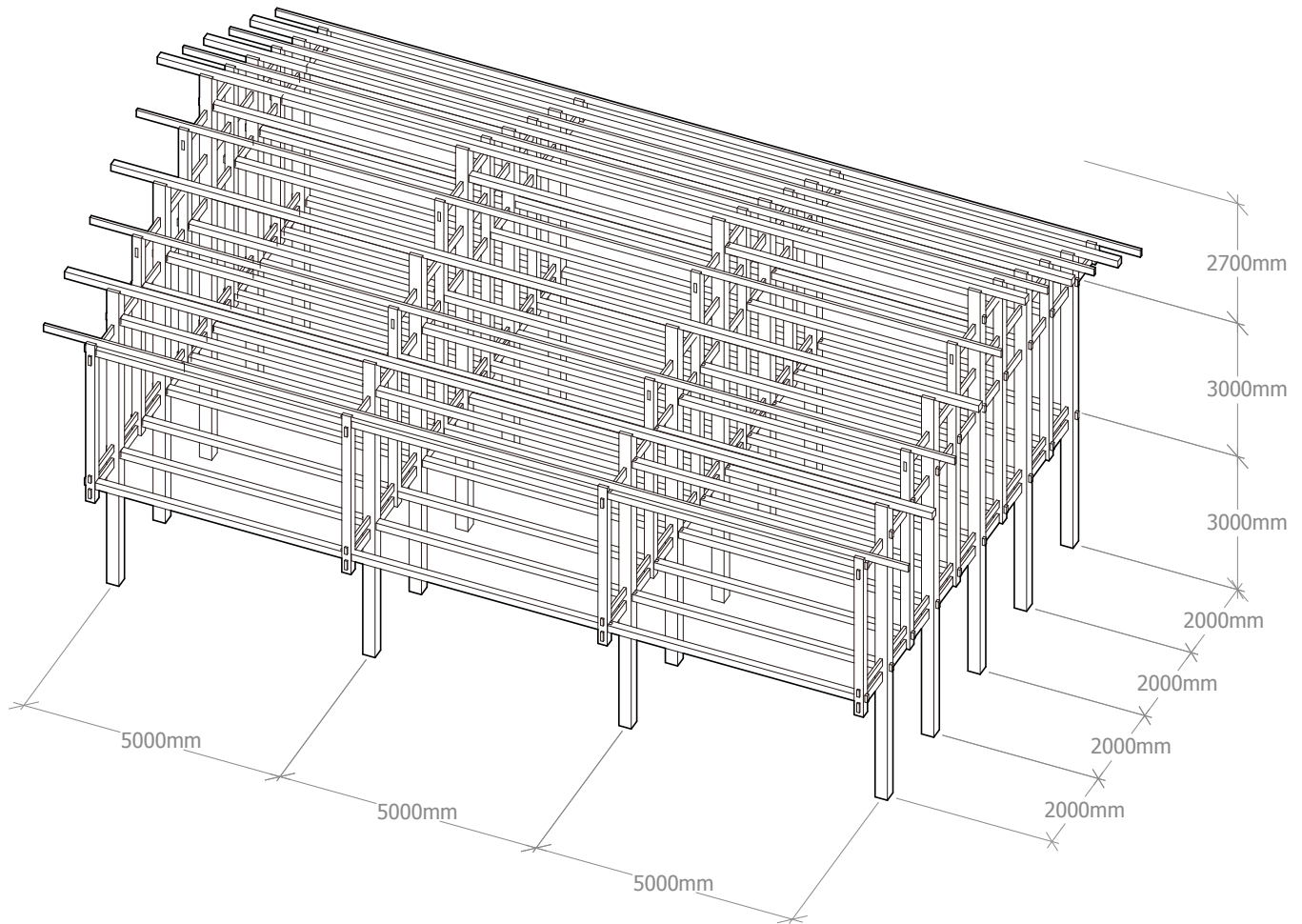


Figure 73. Structural system of the new building form.

on his or her need. The foundation is concrete, and the structure and walls are wood. The wood is imported from Russia. Distinct from vernacular architecture, which has circular columns, the new structure is constructed of square columns. The columns are prefabricated in factories and assembled on site by the construction team. The design simplifies the vernacular structural system. (Figure 73) The introduction of electric power tools and sling carts enables the builder to complete the building more

easily and faster. The building cost 1,200 to 1,300 RMB/m². The construction team is responsible for purchasing and preparing material, and organizing construction. The government pays the design team and construction team separately. The local residents are not involved in the whole process.

(2) Non-profit recreational space

The non-profit recreational space is also funded by the county government. The major constructions since 2013 have been the Shenyong cultural plaza, the Jiutian waterside pavilion, and the lily flower bed (See *Figure 71* and *Figure 66*). The plaza is facing the Shenyong ancestral hall. The statue of Shenyong is erected on the central axis of the plaza (See *Figure 61*). The pavilion is facing the gate village. It is an annular corridor, which encloses a small courtyard in the center. Both the plaza and the pavilion are planned to hold Gelao folk art performances. Hardly any local residents use the plazas in everyday life. The “lily flower sea” has been under construction since 2015. The first phase was completed in 2016. The second phase will replace all the existing farm land of Longtan village. This suggests the agricultural industry is being replaced by the tourism industry.



Figure 74. The public toilet is next to the village gate.

(3) Basic facilities

The public toilet built and opened in the summer 2016 is next to the village gate. It can serve 50 women and 50 men at the same time, having been especially designed for big folk art performances. The building is a one-floor masonry structure, painted in wood color. It was designed and constructed by the same construction company as the one above in (1). (Figure 74)

There are three parking lots in the planning area. They are located next to the tourist service center, the souvenir shops, and Shenyou Plaza. The Lotus Hotel also has its own parking lot, where most of the visitors choose to park.

The governmental support of the development of tourism preserves the vernacular appearance within the village residential area, and meanwhile transforms the village environment through radical modernization. As a result, the spatial fabric and the social structure have both been greatly changed.

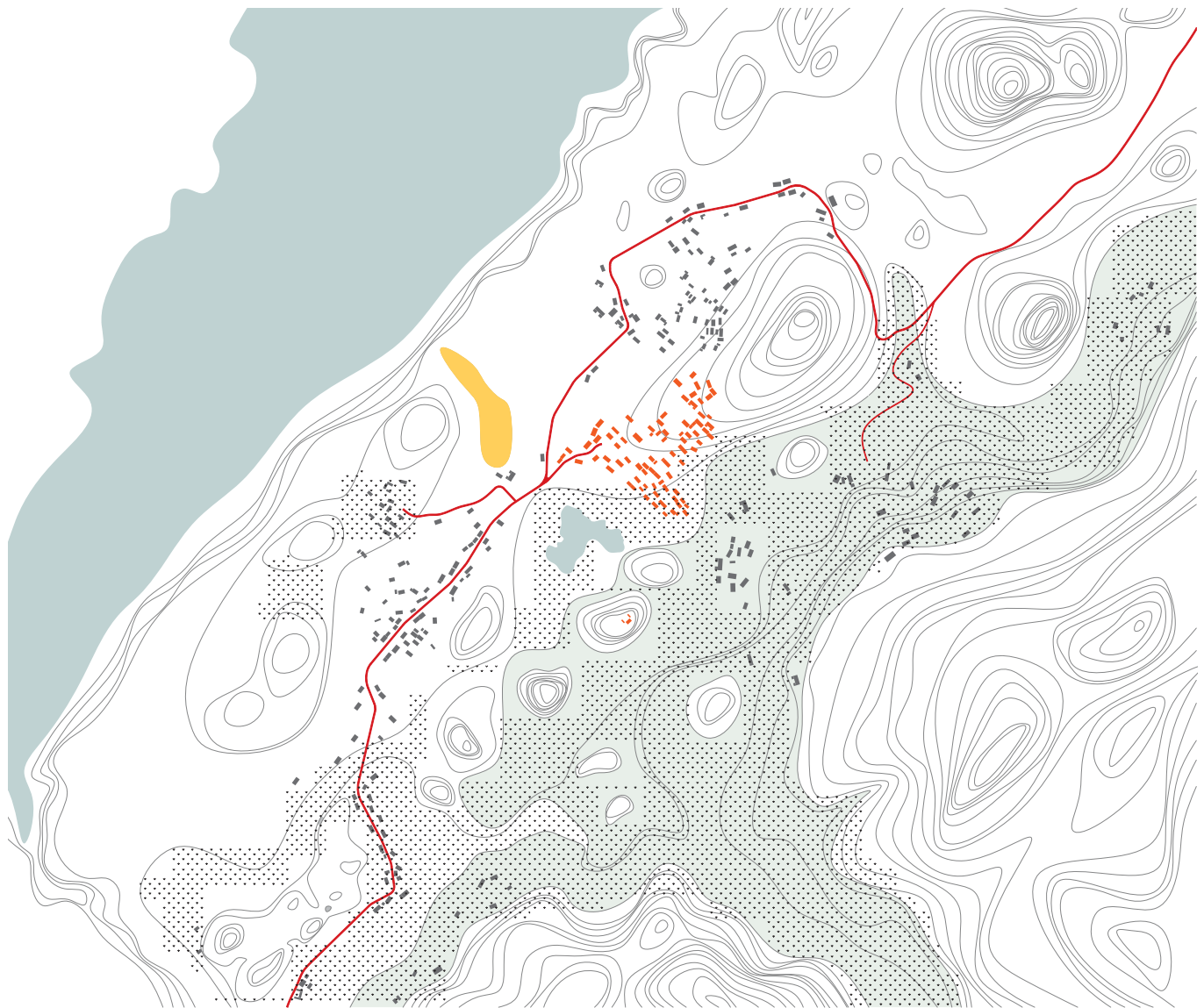
5.3 Key Findings: Village Layers

The case of Longtan traditional village enables this thesis research to capture the transitions in physical and social structures in three historic layers, and to examine the research questions.

5.3.1 Layer 1 – Village community (1400s to 1950s)

The residents of Longtan settled their residences on the slope in front of the small mountain, and facing southwest for maximum solar gain and close to farm land level and Longtan Lake. The buildings are gathered closely to each other and form narrow alleys in the village, which have been the major public space of the village. (*Figure 75*)

The residents used wood to build their house. The wood is easy to obtain in the mountains surrounding the village, and it makes



- Longtan village
- Other villages
- Road
- Water
- Farm land
- Mercury Land

Figure 75. Village layout (1400s to 1950s)

the living space relatively cool in the summer, and keeps the interior warm and dry in the winter. The wooden structure building gradually becomes the vernacular architectural form of the village. Each household has a courtyard in front of its residence, and a small garden that grows vegetables and fruits for the family's diet.

The residents lived on agricultural production and the cinnabar industry. The village building group is surrounded by rice paddies. The mercury mine was next to the Hongdu River on the southwest of the village. Similar to other rural villages in ancient China, Longtan village had long kept the spatial pattern and order of ancient times.

The social structure of Longtan village during this time period was the "village community," as described in Chapter 2. The social structure of Longtan was interpreted in the spatial fabric, which has been long maintained in the history of the village. The residents had their own land and housing properties and had self-sufficient lives. The residents were from the same clan, which was the Shen family, and lived in the same environment, and were therefore, well-acquainted with each other. They assisted each other with construction activities and funerals, worked

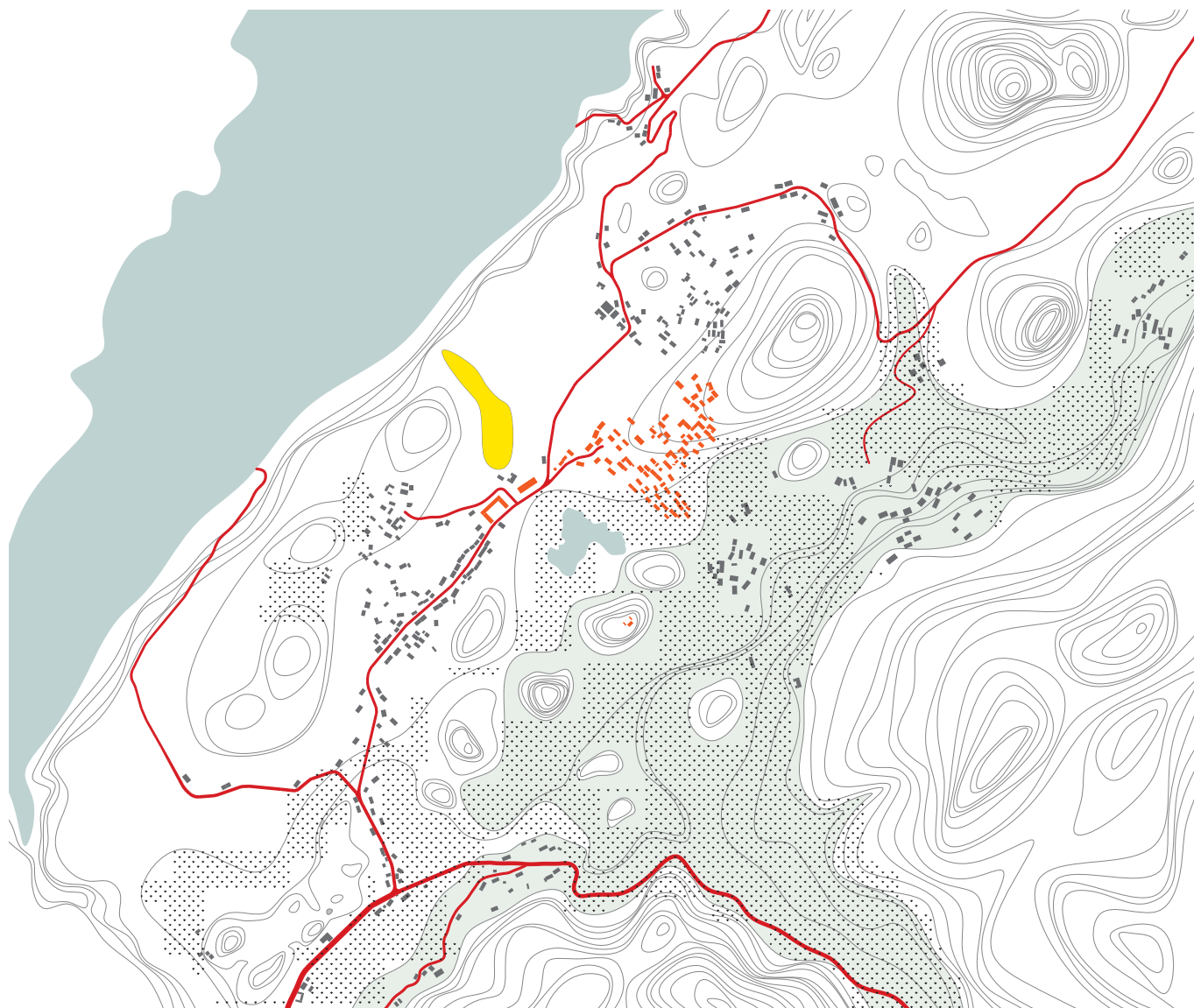
and celebrated collaboratively for ceremonies. These activities, and the spaces where they occurred, formed the connections between the individual households.

5.3.2 Layer 2 – People's commune (1950s to 1980s)

Like the rural villages all over the country, Longtan village was within the larger social organization of the people's commune. Both the village community and the traditional vernacular architecture have been changing over time. (Figure 76)

During the time of collectivism, the land ownership was changed into collective. The residences and lands of landlords were confiscated by the government and given to the peasants. There was not any huge renovation after the new households moved in. It was primarily because the inner upland was economically poor. It could not afford new building. In addition, the commune encouraged individuals to live diligent and thrifty lifestyles.

The school, canteen, and cooperative building were introduced to the village, and new roads were constructed. The buildings were on the outskirts of the village then demolished after the end of commune control.



- Orange square: Longtan village
- Grey square: Other villages
- Red line: Road
- Blue area: Water
- Green dotted area: Farm land
- Yellow area: Mercury Land

Figure 76. Village layout (1950s to 1980s)

The residents worked collectively on agricultural production. The mercury mine was closed because of pollution in the 1960s. The individuals were connected by the communal life and production under the governance of a national institution – the people's commune.

5.3.3 Layer 3 –

Individualization and the impact of preservation

(1980s to present)

Unlike the villages around the coastline of China, which have radically changed since the 1980s, most of the villages in the western region, especially the upland area, developed much more slowly. Longtan village has remained poor because of its lack of connections with the outside. Therefore, many of the vernacular buildings have been preserved. Only due to the state's spotlight on rural development and preserving traditional villages has its spatial fabric been transformed dramatically. The government has been using preservation as the tool of tourism development, aimed at generating economic revenue as well as introducing modern facilities to the local residents. (*Figure 77*)



- Longtan village
- Other villages
- Road
- Water
- Farm land
- Flower bed
- Tourism facilities

Figure 77. Village layout (1980s to present)

With governmental funding, the asphalt road that connected the village to the county via Daping Town was completed in the early 2010s. The road both helps the local residents to reach the outside, and facilitates outside assistance in building tourism facilities. More buildings around the bus stations have been rebuilt as masonry buildings, with the first floor used as shops. Public space for the residents and tourism facilities that were introduced by local government have interwoven with and replaced traditional residential space and farmland.

As a consequence of these broader preservation and economic development efforts, there have been new forms and typologies inside the village. The new forms include modern vernacular buildings, kit houses, brick houses, and a kind of wooden structural buildings designed by a construction company. These new buildings merge into the landscape of the old village, and coexist with the traditional vernacular buildings.

As has been analyzed, most of the traditional vernacular buildings are aligned east, close to the rice paddies. Modern vernacular buildings wrap the old village because new construction sites are usually on the outskirts of the existing building group. There are more modern vernacular residences on the west,

which are also restaurants and hotels, because that area is close to the new tourism facilities. Hence, the village center has been moving westward from the original building groups of traditional vernacular residences. These new modern vernacular buildings are adapted from the traditional vernacular architecture. They were designed by the local dashifu (carpenter) based on the new requirements of the residents in Longtan, and based on preservation policy which is to maintain the integrity of the vernacular by using wood façades.

Wooden framework houses with brick envelope materials are scattered through the village. Some of them are covered with wood due to the preservation policy. The vagueness of preservation policy allowed the importation of the wooden kit house, which was not vernacular to Longtan, but used wood as a building material. It contributed to alienation within village community because it does not require assistance from neighbors.

Wooden structural buildings designed by the construction company could be seen as the “tourism vernacular,” which are the tourism facilities introduced by the local government. They are aligned to the southwest of the village boundaries, along the new road. They are designed based on the traditional vernacular ar-

chitecture, but are more simplified. They are used as shops, bars, restaurants, and other tourism facilities. Even though the tourism vernacular respects the materiality of wood, in order to maintain the integrity of the traditional vernacular architecture, it is not integrally associated with the local residents and their traditions. Above all, the spatial transformation is driven by both the state input and village autonomy, which are two systems that collaboratively form the new social structure. The new structure suggests that Longtan has the characteristics of “village community” and “commune.” Notably, the “commune” here means the governmental input rather than the extreme collectivism of the people’s commune.

In Longtan village, wood is considered authentic to the vernacular architecture. Even though preservation and the development of tourism implemented policies to maintain the wood façade, they have built an invisible wall between the community residents, which unintentionally cuts off the ties in the village in

multiple ways. The new construction projects no longer require community contribution. The new public space and tourism facilities have replaced more and more space within the village. These interventions have not only alienated individuals of the village community, but also have marginalized the village community from tourists.

Above all, the agricultural and mercury industrial village of Longtan with its unique style of vernacular architecture has been changed as a result of social transformations. Vernacular architecture has evolved due to the compromise between modernization of lifestyles and preservation protection. Meanwhile, the village was expanded and tourism facilities introduced. These architectural phenomena in Longtan have contributed to alienation among the members of the village community.

06

Conclusions

The analysis presented in previous chapters have answered the initial research questions:

- *How was “vernacular architecture” first conceptualized in the context of Chinese rural villages?*
- *How has the concept of “vernacular architecture” changed as a result of social transformation?*
- *How the dynamic between “vernacular architecture” and its users influenced rural society over time?*
- *How might the preservation field effectively respond to these changing concepts and relationships?*

Through the chronological study of three historic phases in rural China, and the case study of Longtan village, this thesis has demonstrated that rural vernacular architecture interacts with social systems, and rural environment have been inevitably changed by social transformations. The changing architectural and social aspects provide this thesis lenses to rethink vernacular architecture and preservation in rural areas.

(1) The changing concept of “vernacular architecture”

The concept of “vernacular architecture” has changed over time, and each change has informed the next phase. In ancient times, vernacular architecture included residences and public spaces that were constructed by village communities. In the commune period, more communal spaces and infrastructure were built in the vernacular environment, such as commune canteens and assembly halls. In the post-commune period, vernacular architecture was modernized formally and urbanized typologically. In the case of Longtan, local residents designed and built modern vernacular architecture, and shops and tourism facilities were integrated within the original village fabric.

The transitions in the concept of “vernacular architecture” illustrates the its adaptability, as well as a broadened scope of vernacular architecture.

(2) Dynamics in preservation of vernacular architecture

The early preservation of vernacular architecture has been based largely on the interpretation of international principles. The original goal, as has been theorized and promulgated in the preservation field, is to maintain the richness of physical attributes and

the living culture and livelihood of the local community.¹¹⁵

The changing definition and larger scope of “vernacular architecture” also pose challenges to this universal understanding of preservation of the vernacular. This raises thorny questions. What are the physical attributes to be preserved: materiality, traditional vernacular architectural forms, or modern interventions that promulgate vernacular adaptation? In the case of Longtan, the preservation policies have emphasized maintaining the materiality of wood. The wooden kit house ordered elsewhere contradicts the traditional concept of vernacular in Longtan. In addition, local residents have adapted their houses to modern life in part as a result of the development of tourism. It too is vernacular architecture. Should it be equally preserved as the traditional vernacular heritage? If so, should the new tourism landscape be preserved as a context of this new vernacular?

It should also be clarified that the definition of “community” in rural China is different from the western notion. As this thesis has discussed in Chapter 2, the “community” in rural China is the “village community,” which is based on clanship bonds and territorial bonds. Moreover, following the social transformations, the traditional “village community” has been individualized and

¹¹⁵ ICOMOS. Introduction to *The Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage*. Ratified by the ICOMOS 12th General Assembly. (1999), i.

has relied on national control. Preservation should contribute to maintaining village community in the Chinese sense and to providing improved quality of life for the local residents.

Therefore, heritage practices and policies should seek to understand these dynamics when preserving vernacular architecture, and explore different approaches that better respond to such conditions.

(3) Next phase

The issues that social transformations raised are often not effectively integrated in heritage practices and policies. Working with the vernacular suggests the need to embrace changes in response to evolving conditions and social constructs, rather than focusing simply on mitigating or managing it. This is a difficult premise for the heritage field.

The chronological analysis of this thesis suggests rural China has been transformed and is still under transition. Moreover, each change has left its traces, such as the changing social life after the commune period. Then, how could the next phase be after modernization? Take Longtan village as an example, the development of tourism in recent years seems controversial, left its outcomes hard to predict. If vernacular culture was well

preserved and attracted more urban residents to move to the village instead of just being tourists, would the new immigrants become a part of the village community? If so, would the current scope of village community expand? How might the concept of preservation change again?

(4) Recommendations for new approaches in preservation

(a) Identifying the subject object of preservation

As aforementioned, the vernacular architecture and the community have long been considered as the object of preservation. However, this analysis has demonstrated the complexity formed by the overlapping layers, which challenge the ordinary understanding of “vernacular architecture” and “village community.” Does the vernacular architecture refer to the traditional buildings? Should only the traditional physical entities be preserved? Should the new vernacular architecture in cases like Longtan also be valued? How does or should preservation of the vernacular benefit the village community? The preservation enterprise and those involved should work to clarify the accurate subjects and goals of preservation, and to understand these dynamics in preserving vernacular architecture.

(b) Enhancing connections of individuals in village community

As an object of preservation, village community is inextricably linked to vernacular architecture in rural China. In ancient times, the village community collaborated in construction generations by generations, which preserved vernacular architecture with adaptations and maintains the social structures of the community. Nowadays, local residents are able to adapt and hybridize features from the old and new in many villages. Some of the new buildings, such as the kit house in Longtan, do not require the assistance of other residents, and result in alienation among local residents and individualization of village community. This decreases the shared cultural identity.

If development of tourism in a traditional village is unavoidable, public life and space should be studied to better fit within the everyday life of local residents. For example, in Longtan village, the government introduced new public places for the local community, though it was not used because local residents were accustomed and attached to the original courtyards as assembly areas. In this case, the courtyard could be renovated or expanded, instead of constructing a new plaza.

Preservationists or the preservation enterprise should understand the social and public life of the local residents, and implement

preservation policies that strengthen the connections of individuals in the village communities.

(c) New methodologies of research

New methodologies should seek to document and study the hybridity of different historic layers in a village. The rethinking of vernacular architecture and rural social systems might require different research methodologies.

The field research of this thesis demonstrates that architectural forms of the village are not the only evidence that should be recorded and analyzed. Social traditions and intangible culture based on observations from researchers, oral histories from the local community, and perspectives from local governments and construction companies should also be examined.

New forms and typologies of architecture and rural environment should be equally significant to the vernacular tradition of building. They should be valued, studied, and documented. The social traditions and structures that have been tied to the physical forms should also be examined. A comprehensive analysis would provide new lenses of preservation.

Appendix

Building Inventory of Longtan Village

Wooden structures

Brick buildings

Brick buildings covered by wood

Wooden structure - new

Wooden structure - old

Wooden structure - historic

Provincial historic site

Restaurant and hotels

01a

02

04

06a

01b

03

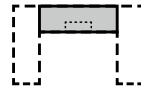
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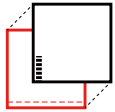
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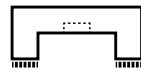
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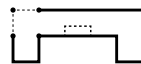
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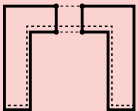
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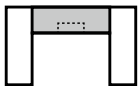
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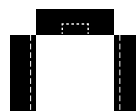
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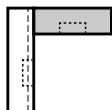
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19b



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21a



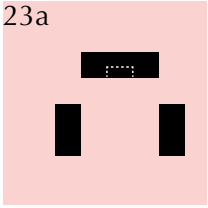
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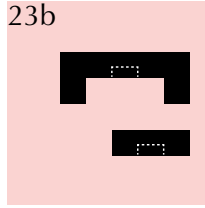
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23a



23b



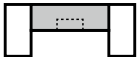
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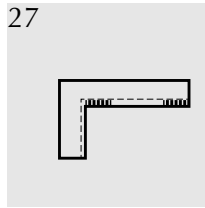
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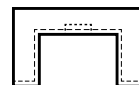
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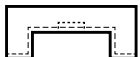
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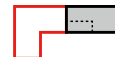
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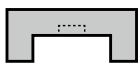
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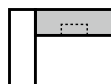
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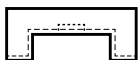
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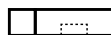
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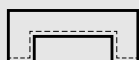
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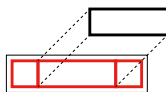
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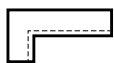
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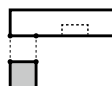
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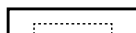
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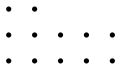
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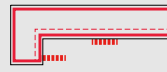
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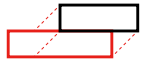
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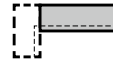
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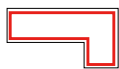
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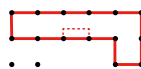
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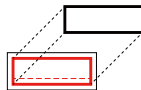
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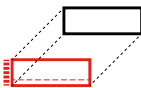
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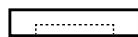
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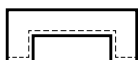
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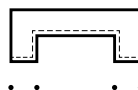
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